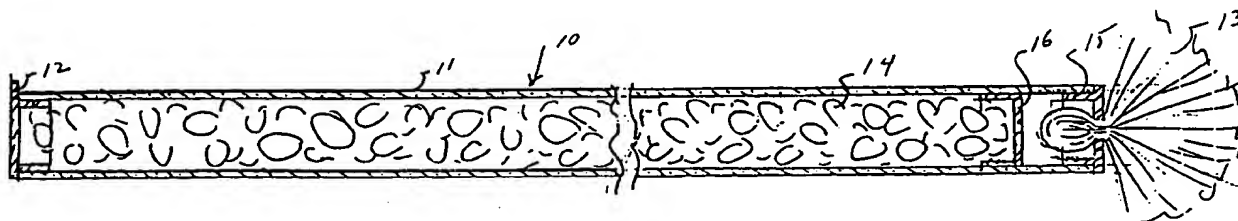


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(54) Title: CENTERPIECE ASSEMBLY SIMULATING FLORAL ARRANGEMENT



(57) Abstract

A container including an elongated hollow member (11) having two ends, an axis, a maximum width and an aperture and being adapted to contain objects (14); a decorative element being axially attached to one of the ends of the elongated hollow member (11) and having a maximum width greater than the maximum width of the elongated hollow member (11); a pom-pom-like portion (13) included in the decorative element, this portion having segments that radiate in substantially three dimensions to substantially fill a central region; an attachment system for the pom-pom-like portion (13) for axially attaching the pom-pom-like portion (13) to the elongated hollow member (11); and an openable cover (15) adapted to obscure the aperture and to substantially contain the objects in the elongated hollow member (11). Also, a plurality of different containers and arrangements thereof in bouquets, fans, frontals, laterals, cascades, conicals, fountains and other geometries.

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1 **CENTERPIECE ASSEMBLY SIMULATING FLORAL ARRANGEMENT**2 FIELD OF INVENTION

3 This invention relates generally to decorative
4 containers, display or presentation racks, stands or bases
5 therefore, and a shipping system. The decorative containers
6 are preferably used as table centerpieces, and more
7 particularly as a part of or an entire centerpiece assembly
8 which simulates a bouquet arrangement of cut flowers. The
9 bouquet effect of the preferred embodiment is achieved by
10 providing a plurality of floral-like elements whose stem is
11 formed by a tubular wand or stem filled with pellets of edible
12 candy and crowned with a flower-like pom-pom.

13 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

14 This application is a continuation-in-part
15 application of U.S. Patent Application Ser. No. 07/925,770,
16 filed August 7, 1992. The specification and claims of that
17 application are expressly incorporated herein by reference.

18 STATUS OF PRIOR ART

19 On festive occasions, such as an engagement, wedding,
20 Bar Mitzvah, confirmation or birthday party, it is often the
21 practice to adorn each table where the guests gather with a
22 centerpiece in the form of a vase or bowl containing a bouquet
23 of cut flowers. Such centerpieces are usually distributed to
24 the guests as a memento of this occasion. The flowers are
25 normally distributed to only a single guest because of inherent
26 transport limitations, e.g., that cut flowers require a vase
27 with water. Distribution is further limited in that there is
28 but one centerpiece typically provided per table, and also
29 because the beauty of flowers is enhanced by their arrangement
30 into a bouquet. Thus, if a host desires that each guest
31 receive a party favor, a separate gift must be provided.

32 When the festive occasion is a birthday party for a
33 child and many other guests are children, the tables are
34 usually laden with candy. At the conclusion of the party, each
35 person in attendance is given a small bag of candy as a parting
36 gift, especially since children typically attach little value

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1 to flowers. Thus, in this case, flowers are inappropriate as
2 a party favor, although they might still be provided as a
3 centerpiece.

4 To entertain young guests at a child's party or on
5 other festive occasions, a host may engage for this purpose a
6 professional magician who performs feats of magic, such as card
7 tricks, illusions, and making a live rabbit disappear from
8 sight. A particular tool of magicians is a wand, which the
9 magician waves to invoke "mysterious" forces while executing
10 the magical feat. Wands have been associated with the
11 supernatural since time immemorial, and their shape evokes
12 particular meaning. Thus fairies, good or bad, are often shown
13 carrying wands, and even the magic flute, whose sounds are
14 reputed to have magical powers, is a wand-like instrument.
15 Therefore, the wand-like shape, when also serving as a hollow
16 elongated member to form a container or receptacle, serves the
17 dual purpose of holding items which may be removed, as well as
18 evoking a certain aesthetic and magical mystique.

19 A preferred embodiment of the present invention thus
20 takes into account not only the decorative function of a floral
21 centerpiece for festive occasion, but also the role of candy
22 and wands on such occasions.

23 U.S. Patent No. 1,491,926 to Rosenwald discloses a
24 support for a bunch of cut a flowers in the form of a vase
25 having installed therein, one above the other, two grids
26 adapted to receive the stems of the cut flowers so as to hold
27 these flowers at different angles.

28 The flower arranging vase shown in the U.S. Patent
29 No. 4,461,118 to Ferting serves a similar purpose. A vase is
30 provided with a perforated wall, the perforations being
31 provided so that the stems of the flowers inserted in these
32 apertures extend outwardly from the side of the vase, while the
33 stems of the flowers received in the mouth of the vase stand
34 more or less upright.

35 U.S. Patent No. 877,145 to Waddell discloses a cut
36 flower holder having a weighted base above which are supported
37 at different levels two apertured plates to receive the stems
38 of the cut flowers.

39 U.S. Patent No. 1,468,743 to Porter shows a candy

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1 package in the form of a plant growing in a flower pot. The
2 bulk of the candies are contained in the pot, the others being
3 supported above the pot to represent blossoms.

4 U.S. Patent No. 4,957,784 to Ripamonti discloses a
5 decorative bow and a method of manufacture therefore.

6 The vase-like display container for candy shown in
7 U.S. Patent No. 3,431,041 to Fontlladosa has an apertured,
8 dome-shaped cover in whose holes are inserted the stems of
9 lollipops, thereby creating a bouquet of lollipops.

10 SUMMARY OF INVENTION

11 It is an object of the present invention to provide
12 a container which includes an elongated hollow member having
13 two ends, an axis, a maximum width and an aperture and being
14 adapted to contain objects; a decorative element being axially
15 attached to one of the ends of the elongated hollow member and
16 having a maximum width greater than the maximum width of the
17 elongated hollow member; a pom-pom-like portion included in the
18 decorative element, this portion having segments that radiate
19 in substantially three dimensions to substantially fill a
20 central region; an attachment system for the pom-pom-like
21 portion for axially attaching the pom-pom-like portion to the
22 elongated hollow member; and an openable cover adapted to
23 obscure the aperture and to substantially contain the objects
24 in the elongated hollow member.

25 It is a further object of the present invention to
26 provide a plurality of different containers and arrangements
27 thereof in bouquets, fans, frontals, laterals, cascades,
28 conicals, fountains and other geometries.

29 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

30 For a better understanding of the invention as well
31 as other objects and further features thereof, reference is
32 made to the following detailed description to be read in
33 conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

34 Fig. 1 is a longitudinal section through a container in
35 accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention;

36 Fig. 2 is an exploded view of the container with the pom-
37 pom like portion in accordance with preferred embodiment of

1 Fig. 1;

2 Fig. 3 is a pictorial side view showing candy pellets as
3 the contained objects being dispersed from the container
4 through the aperture, in accordance with the preferred
5 embodiment of Fig. 1;

6 Fig. 4 is a perspective view of one embodiment of a
7 centerpiece assembly according to the invention, in which a
8 group of containers, in this instance comprising a plurality
9 of containers comprising floral-like elements which are
10 together supported in a bouquet arrangement on a rack-like
11 support structure;

12 Fig. 5 is a top-view perspective of the rack shown in Fig.
13 4;

14 Fig. 6 is a sectional side view of another embodiment of
15 a rack with containers configured in a manner to function as
16 a centerpiece assembly, in which the rack is adapted to
17 support two intermeshed bouquet arrangements of floral-like
18 elements;

19 Fig. 7 is a perspective top view of the rack shown in Fig.
20 6;

21 Fig. 8 is a perspective top view of yet another embodiment
22 of a functioning centerpiece assembly;

23 Fig. 9 is a perspective top view of the rack shown in Fig.
24 8;

25 Fig. 10 is a sectional side view of the rack shown in Fig.
26 9 with containers containing objects situated therein;

27 Fig. 11 is a top view of the rack shown in Fig. 9;

28 Fig. 12 is a side perspective view of a rack and two
29 alternatively embodied, insertable container supports;

30 Fig. 13 is a perspective side view of yet another rack
31 adapted to be able to accept at least one insertable container
32 support or other decorative objects;

33 Fig. 14 is a side perspective view of an apertured
34 cylinder rack;

35 Fig. 15 is a side perspective view of a rack having an
36 eccentric, cyclindrical support for a plurality of tier plates;

37 Fig. 16 is a perspective side view of a bouquet
38 arrangement of a floral like elements in a rack without a base;

39 Fig. 17 is a side view of an apertured dome or hemisphere

1 rack;

2 Fig. 18 is a side view of an additional decorative object
3 attached to a container;

4 Fig. 19 is a side perspective view of a hinged container;

5 Fig. 20 is a side perspective view of a container having
6 tethered covers and a suspension system;

7 Fig. 21 is a side perspective view of an embodiment of an
8 electronic module;

9 Fig. 22 is a side perspective view of a rack containing
10 an electronic module;

11 Fig. 23 is a cutaway side view of an electronic module
12 illuminating fiber optics;

13 Fig. 24 is a cutaway side view of an electro-mechanical
14 module;

15 Fig. 25 is a side view of an electronic module including
16 a flash lamp and fiber optics;

17 Fig. 26 is a cross-sectional view taken along section A-A
18 shown in Fig. 27 and including a light pipe;

19 Fig. 27 is a side perspective view of an elongated hollow
20 member including a light pipe;

21 Fig. 28 is a side perspective view of a wedding popper;

22 Fig. 29 is a side perspective view of a container
23 including a pneumatic module;

24 Fig. 30 is a side perspective view of a vacuum-formed
25 rack; and

26 Fig. 31 is a side perspective view of a bottle in
27 accordance with the invention.

28 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

29 The decorative end closure preferably comprises a
30 pom-pom, and more preferably a pom-pom having floral
31 characteristics. The floral pom-pom provides an aesthetic
32 similarity to a cut flower when attached to a hollow elongated
33 member, and when a plurality of decorative containers arranged
34 together provides an aesthetic substitute for a floral bouquet
35 or centerpiece. Pom-pom decorative elements may also invoke
36 other aesthetic significance.

37 In an apparatus with a floral-like decorative end
38 closure, the hollow elongated element functions as the stem

1 element. In other arrangements, the hollow elongated element
2 may be considered a wand. Because of the container nature of
3 the hollow elongated element, various contents may be inserted
4 in this portion. In a preferred embodiment, the hollow
5 elongated element is a transparent tube which is filled with
6 edible foodstuffs. In a more preferred embodiment, the hollow
7 elongated element is a container filled with colored candies.

8 The present invention provides a centerpiece assembly
9 having a base or stand, providing an arrangement of individual
10 elements, which simulate an array of cut flowers, each element
11 including a supply of edible candy or other goods contained in
12 a hollow elongated member, the elongated hollow member
13 simulating the stem, which may be formed by a tubular wand of
14 transparent material filled with candy pellets whose color
15 imparts color to the stem.

16 The preferred arrangement of the decorative
17 containers according to the present invention comprises a
18 plurality of like containers supported at a single level by a
19 rack, each container being outwardly tilted from a central axis
20 to form a conical formation with the apex down. There may be
21 a plurality of levels of so-supported decorative containers
22 within a single rack.

23 The present invention also provides a decorative
24 container comprising a hollow elongated member having an
25 aperture and an enclosed space for holding contents and a
26 decorative end closure, said decorative end closure preferably
27 forming a pom-pom structure and more preferably having floral
28 characteristics. The decorative container may advantageously
29 also comprise an additional decorative element or a novelty
30 device. Exemplary novelty devices include electronic modules,
31 electro-optic modules, electromechanical modules,
32 electroacoustic modules, acoustic modules, radio frequency or
33 optical signal transceiving (transmitting and/or receiving)
34 modules, piezoelectric modules, volatile composition dispersing
35 modules, cosmetics, pyrotechnic modules, pneumatic or hydraulic
36 modules. These modules may be included within the decorative
37 container or external to it. In a preferred embodiment, a
38 single module may be incorporated in the base or stand and
39 provide a novelty function or suite of functionality for a

1 plurality of decorative containers.

2 The decorative container may also be associated with
3 a module which provides a function other than a novelty
4 function. In this instance, the function may be related to
5 function as a centerpiece, or to another function.

6 It is also an object of the present invention to
7 provide a stand or base providing an arrangement or array of
8 hollow elongated elements. The stand or base provides
9 stability and a three dimensional presentation of the elements.
10 The stand or base may also be used to maintain or assist in
11 maintaining the integrity and arrangement of the elements
12 during transport.

13 The stand or base may also include various functional
14 modules, as described above. A module in the base unit may
15 advantageously interact with a module in the decorative
16 container to provide a distributed functionality. In this
17 instance, the base unit may also advantageously interact with
18 other proximate base units. This interaction may
19 advantageously form the basis of a party game, wherein the
20 individual player element may be the individual or the table,
21 competing against other individuals or tables.

22 A preferred embodiment of the present invention
23 provides that each floral element is a self-contained package
24 for a supply of edible candy, and these elements may therefore
25 be distributed as parting gifts to the guests attending a party
26 in which the centerpiece assembly is placed on a table about
27 which the guests gather.

28 The present invention also provides a centerpiece
29 assembly in which an array of floral elements is supported by
30 a rack so that these elements are clustered in a conical
31 formation to assume the configuration of a bouquet.

32 The centerpiece assembly preferably includes an array
33 of floral-like elements, supported and arranged on a rack to
34 simulate a bouquet of cut flowers. Each element in the array
35 has a stem formed by a transparent tubular wand filled with
36 pellets of candy whose color imparts color to the stem. The
37 lower end of the stem is provided with a removable stopper, the
38 upper end having a decorative flower-like pom-pom attached
39 thereto.

1 A preferable rack according to the present invention
2 is preferably fabricated of transparent material or a material
3 which matches or contrasts the supported elements, and is
4 composed of a base plate having a center post anchored thereon
5 on which are supported at least two tier plates, one above the
6 other, each having a ring of equispaced holes therein coaxial
7 with the center post. In other embodiments, a post may be
8 eccentric or there may be a plurality of posts at each level;
9 the supports may also be tubular or sheet-like. The upper tier
10 ring has a diameter greater than that of the lower tier ring,
11 whereby each hole in the upper ring is spaced a greater
12 distance from the post than the corresponding hole in the lower
13 ring.

14 The stem of each floral-like element is inserted into
15 a respective hole in an upper ring and the corresponding hole in
16 a lower ring, with its lower end resting on the base, whereby
17 the elements of array are outwardly inclined and converge at
18 the base to simulate a bouquet of cut flowers. Of course, a
19 single tier ring could be used to support the bouquet, with the
20 ends of the stems resting on a table, the outward force of the
21 inclined elements balancing the forces of the other elements
22 to maintain a stable configuration. Other configurations are
23 also possible.

 The present invention also provides
24 a decorative container which is designed for use in the direct
25 or outer packaging for cosmetics. In such an application, the
26 decorative end closure may advantageously be employed as an
27 applicator, either by virtue of the decorative element itself
28 serving as a brush or the like, or the decorative end closure
29 being associated with the applicator or the like. The
30 decorative container may also provide a feedback device, e.g.
31 a mirror, fragrance detector, skin hydration tester, color
32 balance meter, reflectivity meter, etc., to assist the user in
33 applying or using the cosmetic.

34 The preferred pom-pom according to the present
35 invention comprises a roughly spherical or spherical section
36 having protruding edges or points rather than surfaces, said
37 edges or points having a visual projection to a central origin,
38 and which face substantially outward. Because the distal edges
39 or points may be traced toward the center, they provide

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1 dimensionality and volume, rather than an external surface or
2 series of surfaces which obscure visibility of a low density
3 central region.

4 A pom-poms according to the present invention
5 includes elements that are sufficiently delicate in structure
6 so as to require their protection during shipping. In these
7 cases the pom-poms can be assembled onto a shipping tray,
8 preferably made of corrugated cardboard, plastic or other
9 structurally protective material. The tray can be
10 prefabricated such that holes, spaces or receptacles areas are
11 spaced far enough apart to keep the pom-poms from injuring each
12 other during rough shipment. In one example, a corrugated
13 tray, holding twelve pom poms, is used to assemble the pom-
14 poms. The pom-poms are held in place by clips, pins, or
15 friction insertion of the bottom of the pom-pom into the tray
16 receptacles areas. These trays can then be placed in shipping
17 containers side by side, whereupon, the decorative containers
18 such as tubes can be placed side by side to create a layer or
19 layers of tubes matching the pom poms in the trays.

20 Some shipping configurations call for three, four or
21 more of these trays to be placed, side by side, or one on top
22 of another or other configuration to optimize shipping and
23 transport costs.

24 In another configuration, a tray, matching tubes, and
25 a display rack are fitted to create a ready-to-assemble
26 arrangement.

27 Another preferred pom-pom according to the present
28 invention is a spherical or hemispherical shaped decorative
29 object formed from a plurality of elements, each preferably
30 having a similar shape or form, or having two different shapes
31 or forms, each having a distal edge. point or projection, each
32 element projecting outward toward a perimeter to form an
33 indefinite edge of the object as a whole. The elements
34 comprising the object preferably has a length which is greater
35 than its girth.

36 The decorative end closure may also comprise a
37 proportionately sized Koosh ball (TM), which is a plurality of
38 rubber strands emanating from a central core.

39 A further type of preferred pom-pom comprises an open

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1 frame architecture consisting of a plurality of relatively
2 dense filamentous structures separated in space by air, each
3 of said filaments projecting from a central portion in a
4 generally outward direction, to form a pom-pom having a
5 substantially spherical shape.

6 The most preferable floral pom-pom decorative end
7 closure of the present invention is preferably fabricated from
8 a synthetic plastic film material such as polyester or
9 polypropylene, and may have a vapor-deposited film of aluminum,
10 amber colored or other metallic coatings imparting color and
11 reflectivity to the plastic film. The material used for
12 forming the pom-pom may also be paper, which may be, for
13 example tissue paper, fringed or, rolled. Alternative
14 materials also include tulle or other fabric, or laminates of
15 metal foil and plastic film. The pom-pom may also include
16 fiber optic elements, electronic elements (e.g. LEDs or
17 incandescent bulbs), latex or rubber filaments (e.g. Koosh
18 ball), or other materials.

19 For particular applications, the pom-pom may be
20 formed from soap leaves or shavings.

21 In order to simulate various natural or distinctive
22 objects such as flowers, the pom-pom may have a color scheme
23 and spatial arrangement adapted to achieve a particular
24 aesthetic value. A preferred type of pom-pom has a
25 substantially spherical or a spherical section shape, having
26 a tuft of ribbon material axially emerging from the center.

27 The pom-pom itself may preferably be composed of a
28 plurality of filaments protruding from a common central source.
29 The filaments may be tufts, cords, ribbons, creased layers of
30 material, leaves, enfoldments, rods or wires. An essential
31 characteristic of the pom-pom is that it has a three
32 dimensional arrangement of flexible elements projecting from
33 a central source, creating an aesthetic dimensionality.

34 Another type of spheric decorative structure
35 comprises an paper accordion structure, in which the paper
36 folds form open spaces which can be traced centrally to an axis
37 of symmetry. Such structures may be affixed to elongated
38 members. Accordion paper structures may be used to form or
39 decorate the centerpiece rack or stand. These paper structures

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1 may be collapsed in order to facilitate shipping. Variations
2 of the shape of the accordion may be obtained by adapting the
3 die cutting process to provide various features, such as floral
4 protrusions.

5 A kit for assembling a decorative display may be
6 advantageously obtained by together providing a stand, adapted
7 after assembly to hold a plurality of members; a plurality of
8 hollow members preferably having a diameter of between
9 approximately 0.75 to 2 inches and preferably having a length
10 of approximately 3 to 18 inches preferably formed of butyrate
11 plastic tubing, a removable closure for each hollow elongated
12 member, and a pom-pom with floral characteristics and
13 subassemblies thereof with a means for attachment to the hollow
14 elongated member. Alternatively, the tube may be blind at one
15 end and the pom-pom attached to a removeable closure.

16 A kit for assembling the decorative containers
17 according to the present invention may advantageously be
18 obtained by together providing a hollow member, preferably
19 having a diameter of between approximately 0.75 to 2 inches and
20 preferably having a length of approximately 3 to 18 inches
21 preferably formed of butyrate plastic tubing, a removable
22 closure and a pom-pom with floral characteristics and
23 subassemblies thereof with a means for attachment to the hollow
24 elongated member. Alternatively, the tube may be blind at one
25 end and the pom-pom attached to a removeable closure. Contents
26 for the tube may optionally be provided.

27 END CLOSURES FOR DECORATIVE CONTAINERS

28 The hollow elongated member of the present invention
29 may be sealed in a number of ways. The end of the hollow
30 elongated member may be inherently blind, or closed by means
31 of a closure. The closure may be an end cap or plug which is
32 inserted into or affixed around an aperture of the hollow
33 elongated member. The distal end may also be closed by means
34 of a cap which fits outside the hollow elongated member. The
35 distal end closure may also comprise a pair of concentric wall
36 elements and a perpendicular wall, which fits both inside and
37 outside the wall of the hollow elongated member. The end cap
38 or plug may be of a friction fit type, sealed with adhesive,

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1 ultrasonically sealed, heat sealed, or mechanically sealed.
2 Further, the end cap or plug may be a screw type or bayonet
3 type closure. The distal closure may be either the primary
4 access port for the contents of the container, or may be
5 secondary.

6 The distal end of the hollow elongated member may
7 also be heat sealed with an flush end foil membrane, which in
8 turn may be open or covered with a secondary covering as
9 described above. The foil membrane is removed by peeling the
10 foil away from the aperture or puncturing the membrane.

11 The decorative end closure may generally employ
12 similar sealing methods to those described for the distal
13 closure. However, the decorative end closure is relatively
14 fragile, and therefore if it is the primary means for accessing
15 the contents of the container, then the sealing method should
16 be such that a relatively low amount of force is necessary in
17 order to remove the decorative end closure. Thus, the
18 decorative end closure should be a friction fit, screw or
19 bayonet type closure, if it is the primary access port.

20 CENTERPIECE ASSEMBLY OF FLORAL-LIKE ELEMENTS

21 In the various embodiments of a centerpiece assembly
22 in accordance with the present invention, as shown in Figs. 4,
23 6, 8, and 10, an arrangement of containers, each being a
24 floral-like element, each generally designated by reference
25 numeral 10, is supported on a transparent rack to create the
26 effect of a bouquet of flowers whose configuration or
27 arrangement depends on the structure of the supporting rack.

28 Each floral-like element 10, as shown in Figs. 1, 2
29 and 3, includes a stem formed by an elongated hollow member,
30 being a tubular member 11 which is preferably formed of
31 transparent, rigid, synthetic plastic material, such as an
32 acrylic polymer, polypropylene or PVC, and may resemble a wand.
33 Received in the lower end of tubular member 11 is an openable
34 cover, the removable stopper 12.

35 Attached to the upper end of floral-like element 10
36 and enclosing this end is a pom-pom-like structure, pom-pom 13
37 which simulates a highly decorative flower. Pom-pom 13, which
38 crowns the stem of floral-like element 10, is preferably

1 fabricated of synthetic, plastic film material, such as
2 polyester, polypropylene or polystyrene optionally having
3 vapor-deposited thereon aluminum, amber-colored or other
4 metallic coatings imparting color to the plastic film. The
5 material used for forming the pom-pom may also be paper, tulle
6 or other fabric, or laminates of metal foil and plastic film.

7 In order to simulate a flower, the pom-pom 13 may be
8 composed of a round puff having a single distinctive color,
9 such as violet, yellow or rose, from which puff emerges at its
10 center a cluster of multi-colored ribbons.

11 Filling a hollow space in the elongated tubular
12 member 11 are objects contained therein, in this instance being
13 a pile or accumulation of colored pellets 14 of edible candy
14 whose sizes such as to be accommodated within tubular member
15 11, the diameter of which in this embodiment is preferably no
16 greater than about one inch. In other embodiments, larger
17 wands may be advantageously be used. These candy pellets 14
18 may be constituted by loose, colored jelly beans, Hershey
19 chocolate kisses wrapped in metal foil, presenting a silver,
20 gold or other metallic color, or M&M chocolate pieces having
21 outer coatings in various colors. Pom-pom 13 is anchored so
22 that its root enters a main cap 15 which encloses the upper end
23 of the wand. An inner cap 16 is also provided to shield the
24 root of the pom-pom 13 from the candy pellets 14. Together,
25 the main cap 15 and the inner cap 16 may comprise an openable
26 cover or be fixed.

27 Thus when tubular member 11 is filled with a pile of
28 jelly beans, the pile may be created by successive sections of
29 beans in different colors, so that the lowermost section is
30 formed by green colored beans, the section thereabove by
31 yellow-colored beans, followed by a section of pink colored
32 beans, and so on. In this way, the pile presents a series of
33 contrasting colors. However, when the pile is created by
34 kisses in a silver-like foil wrappers, then the entire pile is
35 silvery.

36 It should be apparent that the contents of the
37 tubular member 11 is not limited to colored candy pellets 14
38 or even confections, and may also include other foodstuffs,
39 gifts, merchandise, samples, novelties, as may be inserted into

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1 the tubular member 11. While in a preferred embodiment, the
2 tubular member 11 is transparent, in other embodiments, the
3 stem may be colored, and formed of a transparent, translucent
4 or opaque material. It is further noted that the tubular
5 member 11 may be a composite structure, having varying optical
6 properties over its surface. The tubular member 11 may also
7 contain secondary containers, e.g. cosmetics or liquids, which
8 may be removed through the closure, which in the present
9 example is the removable stopper 12.

10 In an embodiment in which the tubular member 11 is
11 transparent, the resultant stem formed and filled with the
12 candy pellets 14 has a color or colors imparted thereto by the
13 candy pellets 14. In practice, the stem may be color-
14 coordinated with the flower simulating pom-pom 13. One can
15 also provide an array of floral-like elements 10, the stems of
16 which are in the respective colors of a rainbow and thereby
17 create a highly dramatic and multicolored bouquet.

18 In order to fill the tubular member 11, removable
19 stopper 12 is removed therefrom, and when the removable stopper
20 12 is returned to the tubular member 11, the candy pellets 14
21 are entrapped in the tubular member 11 of the floral-like
22 element 10 which becomes a candy package.

23 FIRST EMBODIMENT OF THE CENTERPIECE ASSEMBLY

24 As shown in Figs. 4 and 5, in one preferred
25 embodiment of the centerpiece assembly, the assembly is
26 constituted by an array of floral-like elements 10, supported
27 in a bouquet arrangement by a rack, generally designated by
28 reference numeral 17.

29 Rack 17, which is fabricated of transparent and
30 synthetic plastic material of high strength, such as an acrylic
31 polymer or PVC, includes a circular base plate 18. Anchored
32 on base plate 18 is a vertical center post 19 supported at
33 equispaced or quasi-equispaced levels above the base plate
34 circular tier plates 20 and 21.

35 The first tier plate 20, whose diameter is greater
36 than that of base plate 18, is provided with a circular ring
37 R20 of equispaced holes H20, the ring R20 being coaxial with
38 center post 19 and concentric with the periphery of tier plate

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1 20. The second tier plate 21, whose diameter is greater than
2 that of tier plate 20, is provided with a circular ring R21 of
3 equispaced holes H21, equal in number to the number of the
4 holes in ring R19. Ring R21, whose diameter is greater than
5 that of ring R20, is coaxial with center post 19 and concentric
6 with the periphery of tier plate 21. Hence the distance from
7 each hole H21 in ring R21 from center post 19, is greater than
8 the distance of the corresponding hole H20 in ring R20 from
9 center post 19. In order for a stem to go through hole H21
10 into a corresponding hole H20, it must assume an angle relative
11 to the vertical plane.

12 In other embodiments, the symmetry is not necessary,
13 and the arrangement may be eccentric or staggered.

14 For arrangement into a bouquet, floral-like elements
15 10, equal in number to the number of holes in each ring, have
16 their stems inserted in holes H21 and H20 in rings R21 and R20
17 of the tier plates so that the ends of the stems rest on base
18 plate 18. Because of the difference in the diameters of these
19 hole rings, the ends of the stems are clustered on base plate
20 18, the stems being outwardly inclined relative to the base
21 plate to create a conical array of floral-like elements. Of
22 course, an excess number of holes may be provided in each ring
23 so that the number of floral-like elements may be varied
24 according to the number of guests.

25 SECOND EMBODIMENT OF THE CENTERPIECE

26 In the first embodiment of the centerpiece assembly
27 shown in Figs. 4 and 5, the array of outwardly inclined,
28 flower-like elements 10 are so held by rack 17 as to create a
29 single conical bouquet formation.

30 In the second embodiment shown in Figs. 6 and 7, the
31 rack for the centerpiece assembly, generally designated by
32 numeral 22, is constricted so as to create two a two-level
33 bouquet in which a higher cluster of flower-like elements 10
34 forming an upper bouquet is partially nested within a lower
35 cluster of elements to create a more complex floral
36 arrangement.

37 Rack 22 comprises a circular base 23 on which a
38 center post 24 is anchored to support at equispaced or quasi-

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1 equispaced positions above circular base 23 tier plates 25, 26,
2 27 and 28, each having a ring of holes therein, 25H, 26H, 27H,
3 and 28H respectively. The diameter of second tier plate 26 is
4 greater than that of first tier plate 25. The arrangements of
5 holes 25H and 26H is such that, as shown in Fig. 6, the ends
6 of floral-like elements 10 which go through these holes rest
7 on circular base 23 to form a conical cluster.

8 The diameter of the third tier plate 27 is smaller
9 than tha of the second tier plate 26, the arrangements of holes
10 27H and 28H being such that the ends of floral-like element 10
11 which go through these holes, as shown in Fig. 6, rest on tier
12 plate 26 about center post 24 and within the circular ring of
13 holes 26H on this tier plate. In this way, the upper floral
14 element bouquet cluster of elements, which partially nest
15 within the lower flowal element bouquet cluster to rest on the
16 second tier plate 26 which acts as a base with respect to the
17 upper floral element cluster bouquet.

18 THIRD EMBODIMENT OF CENTERPIECE

19 In the first two embodiments of centerpiece
20 assemblies in which floral-like elements are supported in a
21 bouquet arrangement formation on a rack, the location of the
22 holes in the tier plates is such that each floral-like element
23 10 which goes through an upper tier hole is outwardly inclined
24 relative to the center post of the rack and lies in a vertical
25 plane that passes through the vertical axis of the center post.

26 In a third embodiment of the centerpiece assembly,
27 as shown in Figs. 8, 9, 10 and 11, the rack, generally
28 designated by numeral 29, is composed of a circular base 30 on
29 which are supported a first tier plate 32 whose diameter is
30 smaller than that of the circular base 30 and a second tier
31 plate 33 whose diameter is somewhat greater than that of
32 circular base 30.

33 The first tier plate 32 is provided with a ring of
34 five equispaced holes 32H, while the second tier plate 33 is
35 also provided with an equal number of, e.g. five, ring holes
36 33H. Both rings of holes are spaced the same radial distance
37 from the center post 31. However, the holes 32H in first tier
38 plate 32 are angularly displaced with respect to the

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1 corresponding holes 33H in second tier plate 33. In other
2 words, an axis defined by a hole 32H and 33H is not parallel
3 to a central axis of the rack 29, the central axis being normal
4 to the surfaces of the tier plates 32, 33, which in turn are
5 substantially parallel to the support for the rack.

6 Hence, as shown in Figs. 8 and 10, when floral-like
7 elements 10 are inserted through a corresponding set of ring
8 holes 33H and 32H to rest on circular base 30, floral-like
9 elements 10 are then angled with respect to center post 31.

10 Center post 31, as shown in Fig. 10, is provided at
11 its upper end with a cylindrical well 31W into which is
12 inserted the lower end of a floral-like element 10 so that this
13 element which is at the center of the bouquet arrangement is
14 upright. Alternatively, a different decorative structure may
15 be placed at the apex of the rack 29.

16 FOURTH EMBODIMENT OF THE CENTERPIECE

17 In a fourth embodiment according to the present
18 invention, a rack for presenting wand elements is provided in
19 which the direction and/or location of the individual wands may
20 be varied according to the tastes of the decorator, as shown
21 in Fig. 12. The rack comprises a base unit which is placed on
22 a flat surface 40 for support. The base 41, or an element
23 associated with the base has a plurality of cavities 42 into
24 which a cup 43 having a lower protrusion 44 adapted to mate the
25 cavity may be placed. This base 41 element has a large number
26 of cavities 42 so that various optional placements of the cups
27 43 are possible. Therefore, the designer has control over the
28 location of each floral-like element 10 on the base 41 element.
29 If the lower protrusion 44a from the cup 43a is not axially
30 aligned with the cup structure, then the designer also has the
31 ability to select an angle of the cup 43a, thus changing the
32 direction of the floral-like element 10.

33 In another embodiment, as shown in Fig. 13, the base
34 51 is formed of styrofoam or other low density synthetic foam
35 polymer, or wood, and a cup 52 which has an axially aligned
36 screw 53 or dowel, which may be firmly implanted in the
37 styrofoam at any desired angle or location, preferably on an
38 upper surface 54 thereof.

1 A further embodiment of the present invention
2 comprises a styrofoam base 51 which supports a plurality of
3 elongated members 55 which may be plastic tubing or rod, e.g.
4 cylinders, each bearing a symmetric pom-pom 13 having floral
5 features. The lower end 56 of the elongated member may be
6 forcefully inserted in the styrofoam base 51 in order to form
7 an arrangement.

8 A rack for the present centerpiece for supporting the
9 decorative containers may have a central post or be of another
10 design. For example, the rack may consist of an apertured
11 cylinder, as depicted in Fig. 14, a clamshell design, as
12 depicted in Fig. 15, a baseless rack which positions the
13 decorative containers which are supported directly by a table
14 or the like, as shown in Fig. 16, an apertured hemisphere, as
15 depicted in Fig. 17.

16 It will be appreciated that in centerpiece assemblies
17 in accordance with the present invention, while the floral-like
18 elements 10 may be identical or different from each other, the
19 bouquet formation arrangement varying depending on the rack
20 configuration and the selection of elements. Because the rack
21 is composed of components, all of which may be clear and
22 transparent, the decorative impact of the bouquet may be made
23 to depend on the colors of the candies contained in the wand-
24 like stem of the tubular element 11 of the floral-like elements
25 10, as well as the formation and the colors of the pom-pom 13
26 which crowns the stems and on the orientation of the floral-
27 like elements 10 produced by the selected supporting rack.

28 In a preferred embodiment of a rack or stand
29 according to the present invention, a central upper tier plate
30 28 as shown in Fig. 6 is provided in order to accomodate theme
31 object such as a figurine or stuffed animal, a seasonal symbol,
32 a religious symbol, a sports symbol, a sign or indicator, a
33 banner, or the like. Of course, the stand or rack should also
34 include means for retaining the theme object, if necessary.
35 A banner may be placed around a portion of a centerpiece, which
36 banner may display a message, greeting or other text or symbol.
37 Alternatively, a theme object 60 may be affixed by suitable
38 means, such as ribbon 61 to one or more of the tubular element
39 11 of the decorative containers as shown in Fig. 18, which may

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1 be inserted or contained in the rack, in order to enhance the
2 party favor aspect of the functionality.

3 Instead of providing a centerpiece bouquet
4 arrangement of real flowers for festive occasions as well as
5 favours to be distributed to guests at the conclusion of the
6 occasion, one may gain a significant reduction in costs by
7 using a centerpiece assembly in accordance with the invention,
8 which by its very nature functions not only as a centerpiece
9 bouquet arrangement, but also as a supply of party favors to
10 be distributed.

11 The centerpiece assembly of the present invention may
12 also provide a candleholder, e.g. a candle replacing the
13 central floral-like element 10 as shown in Fig. 10, allowing
14 the centerpiece to support a flaming candle in a safe and
15 controlled manner.

16 It is not necessary that the tubular element 11 of
17 the floral-like elements 10 have a removable stopper 12 at its
18 bottom end, for in practice this end may be closed, or
19 permanently covered, in which case the pom-pom 13 at the upper
20 end of the tubular element 11 may be is anchored on a screw-on
21 cap so that the wand can be loaded with candy through the upper
22 end of the wand, the cap being unscrewed when the candy is to
23 be discharged from the wand. Other closure methods are also
24 possible, including bayonet, snap-on, friction fit, adhesive,
25 partial fusion of adjacent plastic elements by thermal or
26 ultrasonic bonding, or the like.

27 The closure need not be fully separable from the
28 tubular element 11, and in fact, when the floral-like element
29 10 is to be distributed to young children, it is preferable
30 that the closure be attached to the wand to avoid accidental
31 ingestion. In this case, as shown in Fig. 20, the closure may
32 be tethered to the wand by a tether 61, which attaches to or
33 encircles the tubular element 11 on one side and the upper
34 closure structure 62 comprising the pom-pom 13, main cap 15 and
35 the inner cap 16. The removable stopper 12 at the base may
36 also be tethered to the tubular element 11 by a stopper tether
37 63.

38 Alternately, the closure may comprise a hinged
39 structure which is tiltable with respect to a longitudinal axis

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1 of the wand, as shown in Fig. 19. When the closure 64 is
2 tilted on hinge 65, full or partial access may be gained to the
3 compartment of the tubular element 11 through aperture 66. A
4 similar structure known to those skilled in the art is employed
5 in the PEZ (TM) dispenser, which actively dispenses candy.
6 When employed as a dispenser, the wand is also supplied with
7 a feed mechanism to juxtapose the contents proximate to the
8 selectively formed aperture, and preferably a means for
9 refilling the dispenser.

10 DIMENSIONS OF CONTAINER AND RACK

11 The present decorative container may be combined with
12 similar containers to form a table centerpiece. It has been
13 discovered that when so used, the decorative containers are
14 placed on a stand or base, and the combination of stand or base
15 and decorative containers should preferably not obscure line
16 of sight visibility. This is particularly problematic when a
17 centerpiece is formed having eight decorative containers on a
18 lower level and four containers on an upper level, such that
19 cross table visibility is substantially limited. The total
20 height preferably should not exceed about 21-24 inches (56-61
21 cm) for a centerpiece having twelve decorative containers,
22 eight on a bottom row and four on a top row, each being 9-15
23 inches in length, and the height of the vision obscuring tops
24 of the container decorations on the lower level being below
25 about 17 inches and the vision obscuring tops of the container
26 decorations on the upper level being below about 21-24 inches.
27 Thus, the height of four or more decorative containers,
28 arranged in a circular array at the uppermost level, should not
29 exceed 21-24 inches. The centerpiece design is preferably such
30 that, when placed on a dining table, a direct line of vision
31 through the centerpiece is not totally obscured by the
32 placement of four or more floral pom-poms clustered together
33 at eye level. A normal dining table has a surface which is 26-
34 32 inches off the floor. The normal eye level over a table is
35 approximately 18 inches. When a linear array of decorative
36 containers is used, then this height limitation is less
37 important. Thus, while linear arrays may be of any size,
38 circular arrays, which tend to obscure visibility of persons

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1 across a table when centrally placed, are preferably limited
2 in density at the normal eye level. A centerpiece designed
3 according to these criteria ensures that the aesthetic
4 structure of the centerpiece simulates a high quality floral
5 centerpiece, placed in the center of a table, without obscuring
6 various individuals from each other. The stand supporting the
7 decorative containers may present them in a fan formation
8 without limitation in height, and preferably having a height
9 of less than about 24-36 inches, in a radial formation, in a
10 staggered radial formation, or other such arrangements as are
11 known in the art. A preferable size for the decorative
12 containers when used as a table centerpiece is about 8-12
13 inches. For use in a table centerpiece, the decorative end
14 closure preferably has a free diameter of 2-8 inches, and the
15 hollow elongated member preferably is a tube having a diameter
16 of 1-1.5 inches. While larger sizes with dense concentrations
17 of members are possible, these are not desirable for use as a
18 table centerpiece, because they may obscure individuals from
19 view.

20 In a preferred embodiment, the length of a tube
21 forming the elongated hollow member has a length to diameter
22 ratio relationship of less than approximately 40:1 and greater
23 than approximately 3:1 in order to achieve the aesthetic values
24 of the desired decorative container.

25 The preferred size relationship of the hollow
26 elongated member of the container and the pom-pom may be
27 expressed as follows. The preferred minimum ratio of the
28 maximum diameter of the pom-pom to the maximum diameter of the
29 hollow elongated member is approximately 1.25:1. The preferred
30 maximum ratio of the maximum diameter of the pom-pom to the
31 maximum diameter of the hollow elongated member is
32 approximately 35:1.

33 The preferred maximum ratio of the maximum diameter
34 of the pom-pom and the length of the hollow elongated member
35 is approximately 2:1, which is especially applicable to
36 decorative containers having a low aspect ratio.

37 When decorative containers are used in a bouquet
38 arrangement in a display stand, it is preferable that together
39 they emulate various types of floral arrangements, known to

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1 those of ordinary skill in the art. This may be achieved by
2 selection of color, size, shape, structure, length and
3 positioning.

4 In a preferred embodiment, an array may be prescribed
5 by an injection molded plastic or vacuum formed plastic rack
6 or stand 104 including receptacles 105 for the ends of the
7 decorative containers. A particularly preferred embodiment
8 is a vacuum formed plastic fan-shaped array for 9 inch long,
9 1 inch diameter decorative containers.

10 Another embodiment comprises an arrangement of
11 decorative containers in a rack or display stand in a non-
12 circular array having multiple levels of origin for the
13 decorative containers. In a more preferred embodiment, a
14 multiple level rack is combined with decorative containers
15 having varying lengths in order to achieve a fountain effect.

16 The rack or stand of the present invention, while
17 generally used to support and arrange a plurality of decorative
18 containers may also be designed to support a single decorative
19 container, and may also be integrally designed into the
20 container.

21 The present invention also comprises decorative
22 containers having a much smaller size. In particular, the
23 decorative containers of the present invention may also have
24 a form factor in the 3-8 inch range. In this embodiment, the
25 decorative end closure preferably has a free diameter of
26 between about 0.75-2.5 inches. The elongated hollow member has
27 a diameter of between about 0.2-1.5 inches. While the 3-8 inch
28 decorative containers may generally be used for holding same
29 purposes contents as larger containers, such as candy or
30 industrial samples, containers of this size are more preferably
31 employed with other types of contents. For example, a 6 inch
32 long, 0.3 inch diameter tubular elongated member with a 1 inch
33 diameter decorative end closure may contain a writing
34 instrument, e.g. a pen or pencil.

35 CANDY PELLET CONTENTS

36 The term "pellet," as used herein, refers to small
37 pieces of candy whose sizes are small enough to fit within the
38 tubular wand, whether or not each piece of candy is wrapped.

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1 When the nature of the candy is such that it will soften or
2 melt when the wand is likely to be found in an environment
3 whose ambient temperature is 80 degrees Fahrenheit or higher,
4 then the candy pellets should be so wrapped to prevent leakage
5 of the candy. Of course, candies having different melting or
6 softening temperatures or having differing consistencies may
7 be wrapped or supplied in accordance with these varying
8 characteristics. The candy pellets filling the tubular element
9 11 may be of mixed types.

10 FIFTH EMBODIMENT WITH AN ELECTRONIC MODULE

11 A preferred embodiment of the present invention
12 provides an electronic module to provide an additional
13 functional, decorative or novelty effect to the individual
14 element, an array of elements, or to a plurality of arrays.
15 The individual elements may be floral-like elements as
16 disclosed above, or may be another configuration decorative
17 container having an elongated hollow member, a decorative end
18 closure, and an aperture to filling the elongated hollow member
19 with goods.

20 A decorative container apparatus according to the
21 present embodiment thus comprises a hollow elongated member
22 serving as a container for user provided goods, a decorative
23 end closure on at least one end of the hollow elongated member,
24 and protruding therefrom, and an electronic module providing
25 enhanced functional, decorative and/or novelty functionality.

26 According to the present embodiment of the invention,
27 the tubular element or elongated hollow element of the
28 decorative container includes, preferably at or in the
29 decorative end closure, certain electronic devices. These
30 devices may perform any type of function; however, it is
31 preferred that the electronics be intended for novelty effect
32 or be of a decorative nature.

33 A first variation, shown in Fig. 21, includes a small
34 electronic circuit 71 in the end closure 72 which includes a
35 power source, preferably two watch-type batteries 73,
36 subminiature or miniature type cell or cells, e.g. size AAA or
37 9V, with a blinker circuit. The blinker circuit is preferably
38 formed from a timer circuit, e.g. an ICL7555 CMOS timer

1 circuit, configured with various associated elements to provide
2 an approximately 5% duty cycle pulse with a repetition rate of
3 approximately 750 mS to one or more light emitting diodes 74
4 (LEDs) arranged in the decorative end closure, at the perimeter
5 of thereof, in the distal end closure or in the elongated
6 member. The repetition rate and duty cycle can, of course, be
7 tailored for the aesthetics, ergonomics and particular
8 components of the particular application. The intensity of the
9 LEDs may be varied to be visible under the ambient conditions
10 without being particularly distracting. An ambient
11 illumination intensity detector may be employed for this
12 purpose, e.g. a photocell, CdS detector, phtodiode, etc., which
13 would be used to alter the light output by modulating number
14 of LEDs, the average ON current to the LEDs, or the repetition
15 rate (e.g. pulse amplitude modulation, pulse width modulation,
16 pulse frequency modulation, or a combination of techniques).
17 The intensity of the LEDs is also influenced by the position
18 within the element. An LED buried in a pom-pom or puff would
19 likely require a greater light output than an LED located at
20 the periphery of the decorative closure.

21 The blinking circuit may be further enhanced by
22 providing a proximity sensing function to activate the blinking
23 when a person or other object approaches or is nearby. The
24 proximity sensing element can be of any known type, but it is
25 preferred that the element be a sound detection device or a
26 light intensity detection device. Other known proximity
27 devices suitable for use in the present invention include an
28 optical reflectance detector, a sonar-type acoustical
29 reflection signature detector, a variable capacitance or
30 reluctance based proximity detection, and a sound recognition
31 device. These proximity detectors may activate the electronic
32 device for the duration of the proximity of the person or
33 object or for a set period after being triggered. Other
34 arrangements as known in the art may also be suitable. The
35 proximity sensing device serves two functions. First, it
36 conserves power by activating the primary electronic function
37 only when it is likely that there is an observer. Second, it
38 provides an increased complexity of operation which will be
39 more interesting to the observer.

1 Other types of activation systems for an electronic
2 module are also possible, including magnetic switching, radio
3 frequency signals, infrared signals, motion detection,
4 mechanical switching, vibration detection, tilt detection and
5 shake detection.

6 In another embodiment, a "light organ" system, the
7 electronic circuit includes a plurality of colored LEDs 74,
8 e.g. red, yellow, green and orange or bicolored or tricolored
9 LEDs being selectively activated based on a frequency content
10 of an acoustical signal received by the an acoustical
11 transducer 75, e.g. a microphone. This embodiment is
12 especially applicable for use of the device as a centerpiece
13 at a party where music will be present. The preferable power
14 source in such a case would likely be 2 "C"-type carbon-zinc
15 or alkaline cells due to the greater power demand, which may
16 be inserted into a compartment 77 in a base 76, as shown in
17 Fig. 22.

18 Another embodiment includes a radio receiving device,
19 which may be used instead of the acoustic transducer to control
20 the "light organ" system described previously, or merely as a
21 novelty radio. In this case, the radio speaker 78 may be
22 mounded proximate to one or the end closures or hidden in the
23 decorative end closure.

24 A still further embodiment includes a plurality of
25 LEDs 79 or preferably multicolored LEDs in the end closure
26 electronic package 80. These LEDs are arranged densely packed
27 and illuminating a plurality of light pipes 81. The light
28 pipes may form a part of the decorative end closure and also
29 project into the hollow member. The light pipes will transmit
30 the colored light from the LEDs to the tips 82 thereof. By
31 varying the color of illumination of the light pipes by the
32 multicolored LEDs or plurality of LEDs, attractive visual
33 effects may be obtained. Thus, by cyclically varying the
34 color, a swirling effect around the decorative ornament may be
35 obtained.

36 In a preferred embodiment, a plurality of light
37 sources are sequentially activated around the rack or stand
38 structure, or in the decorative containers themselves. These
39 light sources are preferably subminiature incandescent bulbs

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1 or LEDs and are driven by a circuit which may be used to
2 control both sequence and amplitude of each element. The
3 sequence may vary according to a plurality of stored programs,
4 be responsive to externally supplied parameters, or respond to
5 music or light. The light sources may also be provided in a
6 dot matrix display to display patterns or messages. The dot
7 matrix display may be monochrome or multicolor, and is driven
8 in a known manner.

9 In another embodiment, liquid crystal display (LCD)
10 elements are provided on either the rack or stand or in
11 conjunction with the decorative container. The LCD may be used
12 to create decorative patterns or to convey information.

13 In yet another embodiment, as shown in Fig. 24, a
14 decorative end closure 83, which preferably includes a pom-pom
15 13, is affixed to a moveable element 84 which is attached to
16 an electromechanical drive system 85. The electromechanical
17 drive system may be activated by any of the aforementioned
18 proximity sensors or acoustical signal sources. This
19 embodiment is similar to the known "dancing flower" or "dancing
20 can" systems known in the art. However, the present system
21 includes a functional container. Prior art systems do not
22 comprise an enclosed space provided for holding and/or
23 transporting contents unrelated to the "dancing" action.

24 The electronic module may also include other types
25 of vibrating mechanisms, which may be manually initiated or
26 electronically controlled.

27 A further embodiment of the present invention
28 comprises a flash lamp, as shown in Fig. 25, preferably a
29 xenon-type flash lamp or strobe lamp. In this case, the flash
30 lamp 86 may functionally replace the LEDs described above.
31 However, flash lamps are somewhat different in configuration
32 and function from LEDs. Therefore, it is preferred that the
33 flash lamp be contained in a separate module 87 in proximity
34 to an end closure of the hollow member. Light emitted by the
35 flash lamp may exit the hollow member in a number of ways.
36 First, the hollow member may be formed or transparent or
37 translucent material 88, thus allowing a direct light
38 transmission. Second, the flash lamp tube may be in proximity
39 to a light pipe or preferably surrounded by a plurality of

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1 light pipes 81. The light pipes may then be bundled and form
2 part of the decorative end closure. Such an arrangement will
3 create an effect of "lightning tips" of a floral bouquet
4 because of the transmission of light to the tips 82 of the
5 light pipes 81. Light pipes 81 may also cause light to be
6 emitted along the elongated member. Depending on the structure
7 and composition of the elongated member, the wall itself may
8 serve as a light pipe. Because flash lamps emit light in the
9 ultraviolet range, certain fluorescent pigments and components
10 may be employed to create special lighting and color effects
11 based on the flash lamp excitation.

12 A further embodiment of the flash lamp embodiment
13 includes a light sensor 89 which will trigger the flash lamp
14 in one decorative container in relation to a proximate flash
15 lamp in another decorative container, or other communication
16 system. The decorative container should also have a trigger
17 based on a timer circuit with a relatively long time constant,
18 so that activation is assured. In this arrangement, after the
19 lamp has been triggered, it is refractory for a set period of
20 time determined by one or both of a timer or control circuit
21 and a flash capacitor recharge circuit. When the refractory
22 period has expired, the flashlamp is triggerable. The trigger
23 for the lamp is based on a light detector, adapted to detect
24 a flash from a neighboring unit. The flash may occur
25 immediately, thus causing the flash lamps to fire
26 simultaneously, or after a short delay, which would effect a
27 staggered firing. Additional circuitry could also be employed
28 to achieve an extended staggered triggering, so that few or
29 none of the flash lamps will fire simultaneously, but rather
30 will initiate a long pattern of flashing across a room. Each
31 trigger system also includes a relatively long time constant
32 timer which would trigger the flash after a set period. This
33 will ensure that the flash process is initiated, and will allow
34 a single unit to operate. After the flash is triggered, the
35 process repeats.

36 Extended staggered triggering may be achieved by
37 setting various triggers with different delays from the
38 previous flash prior to firing. Thus, the shorter latency
39 triggers will fire first, followed by the longer latency

1 triggers. The trigger latency is preferably shorter than the
2 recharge cycle/refractory period, so that the longer latency
3 units fire before the shorter latency units recycle.

4 Because the various units are interactive, the
5 pattern of triggering will change as units are removed from
6 centerpieces or moved around a room, creating an interesting
7 effect.

8 An alternative triggering embodiment employs an
9 acoustic trigger, which may be music or an audible or inaudible
10 acoustic signal. The acoustic trigger may be a simple sound
11 pressure level activated trigger, or a complex music or noise
12 based detection system. Of course, the units may detect a
13 plurality of different or identical triggers, including nearby
14 flashes, acoustic signals, and data transmissions, allowing
15 complex interactions and control of the units.

16 In yet another embodiment, the decorative container
17 or containers are associated with a base. The base is designed
18 to be stable, such that the associated containers and base do
19 not tip over, even when one or more of the containers are
20 removed, or the containers are unevenly filled with dense
21 contents. The base may contain an electrical or electronic
22 circuit, for example a motor driving a rotary platform, on
23 which the containers are mounted. The base may have a single
24 level of units, or may have a multilevel array of units. The
25 base may include an illumination source for illuminating the
26 decorative containers associated therewith.

27 The base 76 may also include electronics for
28 controlling or activating effects in the individual containers.
29 Thus, for example, the base may include a flash lamp or other
30 optical source and associated drive and control circuitry. A
31 portion of the hollow elongated member 90, preferably at bottom
32 portion thereof, is intimately associated with a portion of the
33 base 79, such that optical output from the base is transmitted
34 to the member through a light transmissive element 91. At the
35 point or area of association, a light transmissive member
36 transmits the light to another portion of the member,
37 preferably a decorative upper portion having a decorative end
38 closure, e.g. a pom-pom or other device. The light
39 transmissive element is preferably divided so that the

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1 decorative end portion may be affixed separately from the light
2 transmissive element. The decorative end portion may then
3 radiate the light. This arrangement allows a fully passive and
4 replaceable decorative container to be associated with a
5 reusable and sturdy base unit, thus reducing the incremental
6 cost of the wands. Further, because flash lamps have a high
7 voltage drive, this arrangement will increase the safety of the
8 system. Finally, because the tubular member and decorative end
9 fixture are fully passive, with only a light transmissive
10 element, no volume is lost due to an electronic module and
11 associated power source. An added advantage is that more
12 efficient and economical "C" or "D"-type cells may be used in
13 the base which serve as both power source and ballast.

14 The base, of course, may also serve other functions.
15 For example, the base may be an element of a party game, such
16 as a data transceiver. Thus, each table, on which the base and
17 decorative containers are placed are a "team". A master of
18 ceremonies ("MC") asks a question of the audience. When a
19 person believes that he knows the correct answer, he pushes a
20 button which activates the base to flash the decorative
21 elements and send out a signal, which may be optical, infrared,
22 audio, supersonic, or radio frequency, e.g. AM, FM, spread
23 spectrum transmission, etc., which prevents other base units
24 from also being activated. The MC then determines whether the
25 answer is correct. If so, the "team" scores and the base unit
26 indicates the increment on a score keeping device, based on the
27 ruling of a judge, who may be the MC. If the answer is
28 incorrect, a penalty may be extracted from that team, such as
29 a score decrement. The second base to register a button push
30 or activation may then be given an opportunity to answer the
31 question, in a manner analogous to the first base unit. As in
32 television game shows, a "daily double" or the like may be
33 programmed, which may be associated with a unique visual or
34 auditory signal. A plurality of signal may be available for
35 each base unit. For example, the first base flashes white
36 light. If the answer is correct, the base flashes blue light,
37 which may be formed by filtering the output of a single white
38 light source or providing a plurality of different color light
39 sources. An incorrect answer causes a red flashing light. A

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1 daily double or other special feature causes a green flashing.
2 Alterations and variations of the present example will be known
3 to those skilled in the art, and are included within the scope
4 hereof.

5 In another embodiment, each decorative container
6 device contains as traneiver, which may be infrared or radio
7 frequency, e.g. TDMA, FDMA, CDMA, spread spectrum, etc., to
8 provide "cellular wanderful" (TM) communication between guests.
9 This telecommunication system may be centrally controlled, or
10 a direct communication type system with distributed control.
11 Calls or transmissions may be made anonymously by providing a
12 voice altering function. The telecommunication function may
13 also be used to communicate with food service staff to assist
14 in providing excelent service at a party.

15 In order to assure efficient transmission of light
16 into and across light pipes, a fluid or sealant having
17 appropriate refractive index may be used. This fluid or
18 sealant should be selected to be in accord with the intended
19 use of the device. Thus, if foodstuffs are contained in the
20 hollow member, any such fluid or sealant must be nontoxic and
21 approved for such use and reasonably contained away from the
22 edible contents. Thus, if contained properly, a silicone or
23 food oil may be used. Preferably, however, an appropriate
24 food-grade silicone RTV sealant may be used to ensure efficient
25 light transmission between the various optical elements.

26 Thus, it is apparent that the invention, according
27 to the present electronic embodiments comprises an elongated
28 member having a decorative end closure, an elongated hollow
29 member, serving as a container for user definable contents and
30 an electronic or electrical element designed to enhance the
31 decorative or novelty value of the apparatus. Further, while
32 the container apparatus may be used alone, various features
33 become possible when a plurality of containers are used in
34 combination. Finally, the electronic module may be physically
35 separated from the container to provide a reduced cost
36 container with a reusable electronic module. This latter
37 arrangement facilitates the use of the container as a party
38 favor and enhances the decorative nature of an arrangement of
39 the containers as a party centerpiece.

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1 STORED ENERGY EMBODIMENT

2 The invention according to the present embodiments
3 comprises a hollow elongated member serving as a container for
4 user provided goods, a decorative end closure on at least one
5 end of the hollow elongated member, said decorative end closure
6 being made of a material compatible with the intended use, and
7 a device adapted for the rapid release of stored energy
8 producing a novelty and/or decorative function.

9 In these embodiments of the present invention, the
10 hollow elongated member or the decorative end closure may be
11 associated with a single use novelty device, such as a
12 sparkler, "party popper", expulsive streamer, or other device
13 which provides an pyrotechnic, explosive or explosive-like
14 release of energy in a safe and controlled manner. The
15 decorative end closure in this instance is associated with a
16 device which stores energy which may controllably be released,
17 and which, when released, produces a decorative or novelty
18 effect. The stored energy may be chemical or explosive,
19 pneumatic, mechanical, or other known energy storage means.
20 The stored energy is preferably released under the control or
21 influence of a person.

22 Mechanical energy storage systems are known in the
23 art, and include springs. A spring may be advantageously
24 employed to expel objects from a tube or other device. Thus,
25 streamers, rice, jumping "snakes" and other articles may be
26 forcefully expelled using stored mechanical force.

27 The function of a sparkler device is known in the
28 art. In general, these comprise a ground mixture of a metal-
29 based pyrotechnic composition bonded to a wire. When ignited,
30 the pyrotechnic composition burns brightly from a distal end
31 to a proximal end, the ignited portion producing a bright glow
32 and radially expulsing sparks, and igniting an adjacent portion
33 of bonded pyrotechnic composition, so that the combustion
34 process proceeds in a controlled and spectacular manner.
35 Various compositions may be used which burn in various colors.
36 When the present invention comprises a sparkler, the decorative
37 end closure is preferably formed from fire proof or fire
38 retardant materials, and provides a small aperture for securely
39 mounting the central wire of the sparkler. A plurality of

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1 sparklers may also be mounted on each decorative end closure.
2 It is also within the scope of the present invention to provide
3 the sparklers attached to the hollow elongated member or to the
4 base, or contained within the hollow member.

5 In other embodiments, as shown in Fig. 28, a "party
6 popper" 92 element is included as a part of or in association
7 with the decorative end closure having a pom-pom 13 or the
8 like. A "party popper" is a device which contains a small
9 amount of explosive composition, a fireproof material to be
10 expelled from the popper, a releasable end cap, an outer
11 container and an ignition device. The ignition device is a
12 string which, when forcefully extracted from the outer
13 container, causes ignition of the explosive composition. The
14 pressure in the outer container rapidly increases, until the
15 releasable end cap is expelled. The fireproof material is
16 released and forcefully expelled. The fireproof material is
17 preferably a streamer. In the present embodiment, the "party
18 popper" 92 device is preferably incorporated at the center of
19 the decorative end closure 93 or at the distal end of the
20 decorative container 94. The decorative end closure in this
21 instance would preferably be fire proof. The ignition device
22 string 95 is routed from an internal portion of the decorative
23 end closure to an accessible location on the outside of the
24 decorative container. When pulled, the string will ignite the
25 small amount of explosive and cause the forceful expulsion of
26 streamers or the like, and create a festive novelty effect.
27 A party popper can also be triggered by removing or opening a
28 closure device of the decorative container. The explosive
29 release also causes a popping sound. Alternatively, the string
30 ignition device could be replaced with an electronic ignition
31 device. In this instance, an electric current locally heats
32 a wire to a temperature which either directly causes ignition
33 of the explosive charge, or ignites a primer charge. In the
34 case if electric ignition, it is preferred that the electric
35 current source be shipped separately from the decorative
36 container and that the necessary electrical connections be made
37 immediately prior to use. In a preferred embodiment, the
38 electric current source resides in a base unit, and the
39 decorative containers are inserted in holders which facilitate

1 the electrical connections. The "party popper" may be
2 triggered by a manually operated electrical switch, or by other
3 means. For example, the trigger could be a radio frequency
4 signal, an infrared light transmission or an ultrasonic wave.
5 In any event, the device should have a fail-safe trigger
6 mechanism and also be positioned to avoid injury in the event
7 of inadvertent or unexpected ignition.

8 In a preferred embodiment, a "wedding popper"
9 contains rice 96 and has a party popper 92 device. When opened
10 or activated, the party popper 92 ignites, releasing streamers.
11 A spring 98 loaded plunger 97 may advantageously expel the rice
12 96 toward a wedding couple. A wedding popper may be a reusable
13 or rechargeable device, or may be a keepsake.

14 The "party popper" embodiment decorative container
15 may also be used in conjunction with the party game embodiment,
16 such that the decorative containers of a winner will be
17 activated.

18 In another embodiment, the use of explosive
19 compositions is avoided in order to facilitate transportation
20 and reduce safety hazards. The stored energy source is a
21 compressed gas canister, which may be air, nitrogen, helium,
22 nitrous oxide or carbon dioxide. The canister may be a metal
23 cartridge, e.g. carbon dioxide, air, or nitrous oxide. When
24 a standard-type cartridge is employed, a mechanical element
25 punctures an end closure of the canister, causing the release
26 of gas. This release may be rapid and be used to expel
27 streamers or the like. The gas release may also be modulated
28 and controlled, to produce a variety of mechanical or acoustic
29 effects, such as driving a turbine device, causing a turbulent
30 flow in proximity to the decorative end closure to cause
31 movement, activating an air-powered horn, inflating a balloon,
32 expelling confetti or streamers, propel objects, etc.
33 Generally available gas canisters contain more gas than is
34 generally necessary for a single decorative container. In this
35 case, a single gas canister may be provided in a central base,
36 which is connected by tubes or hoses to the decorative end
37 closure or hollow elongated member. The release of gas may be
38 controlled or uncontrolled, and the decorative containers may
39 be subjected to the flow of gas simultaneously or sequentially.

1 As an alternative to a gas canister, pressurized gas
2 may be created in situ, immediately prior to use. This gas may
3 be stored in a closed compartment 100 in the hollow elongated
4 member 101 or proximate to the decorative end closure 102, as
5 shown in Fig. 29. The closed compartment may be formed
6 integrally by the hollow elongated member or by means of a
7 volume confined gas impermeable membrane (e.g. a balloon 103
8 in an enclosed space). The pressurized gas may be formed by
9 means of an external or internal pump, the release of carbon
10 dioxide from the chemical reaction of an acid with sodium
11 bicarbonate in aqueous solution, the sublimation of dry ice,
12 preferably accelerated by contact with water, release of carbon
13 dioxide from carbonated water, etc. The pressurization of air
14 in a balloon, at least a part of which is external to the
15 container, may advantageously be used for decorative purposes.

16 In those instances where the gas is produced in
17 conjunction with an aqueous environment, a gas-liquid
18 separation system, such as a gas permeable membrane, is
19 preferably used to avoid the forceful release of liquids,
20 unless this is the desired effect.

21 The decorative container may also be used as a
22 watergun. In this case, water may be directly pressurized and
23 expelled through a small aperture, or the water may be subject
24 to pressurization by a gas, which provides a pressure
25 reservoir, allowing a continuous stream of water to be
26 expelled. The compressed gas may be in direct contact with the
27 water or may be separated by a flexible membrane or other means
28 for transmitting the pressure. This embodiment is similar in
29 respects to a "supersoaker" (TM) watergun system.

30 The compressed gas, when released, is preferably
31 shunted to a secondary container wherein the streamers or other
32 contents are held. One portion of the secondary container
33 comprises a large aperture pressure relief valve. When the
34 pressure in the secondary container exceeds the relief pressure
35 of the valve, the valve opens. Because of the large aperture
36 of the valve, the streamers are released and forcefully
37 expelled.

38 The foregoing descriptions of embodiments are
39 exemplary only, and other pyrotechnic and pneumatic effects as

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1 known in the art may also be included as components of
2 embodiments of the system of the present invention.

3 OTHER DEVICES

4 The decorative end closure or hollow elongated
5 element may also include a mechanical or electronic acoustic
6 device. Thus, when activated, the decorative container will
7 make noise. The noise may be a radio receiving device, a music
8 box (preprogrammed music) device, a musical instrument (human
9 controlled sounds), or noise maker. An example noise maker is
10 a device in which a weighted piston moves within a cylinder by
11 gravity, wherein air on one side of the piston passes through
12 an aperture with a vibrating element to make a sound. This
13 sound may simulate a cow, for example.

14 The decorative container may also serve as a whistle,
15 activated by a person blowing by mouth or by moving or waving
16 the elongated member in such manner as to cause a resonance of
17 air in the hollow member. When used as a whistle, the
18 container preferably has a large open space, and therefore has
19 only a small amount of contents, or indeed, no contents at all.
20 In addition, the decorative container may also serve to hold
21 goods when filled, and as a whistle when empty.

22 PEN EMBODIMENT

23 A preferred embodiment comprises a pen having, at a
24 non-writing end thereof, a compartment bounded on at least a
25 portion of its radial surface by a transparent window, in which
26 a viscous fluid is contained. In the fluid is a translatable
27 element having a density greater than the fluid, being free to
28 settle by gravitational forces to a lower end of the
29 compartment. The translatable element preferably moves along
30 a guide and has a graphic imprinted on it, with further
31 graphics present in the compartment.

32 EMBODIMENT FOR PACKAGING COSMETICS

33 Containers, preferably in the range 3-6 inches, but
34 generally in a broad range of sizes, may also be used with
35 various types of cosmetic products. These products include
36 perfumes, colognes, eye liner, mascara, blush, nail polish,

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1 etc. Because of the relatively high cost of cosmetics and the
2 generally relatively small size of the containers, the
3 materials used in the decorative end closure can reasonably be
4 made of higher quality and/or cost materials and constructions
5 than containers intended for other purposes. Thus, the
6 decorative end closure could be constructed entirely of fiber
7 optic elements 81, with an LED 74 or incandescent bulb in the
8 cap, powered by watch-type batteries 73 and activated by a
9 switch 106. Such construction might be less suitable for
10 larger size decorative containers. Other light sources may
11 also be used in either the tubular element or the rack
12 structure, or both, including neon bulbs, fluorescent bulbs,
13 electroluminescent panels and the like.

14 In another embodiment of a decorative cosmetic
15 container, the decorative end closure comprises a cosmetic
16 applicator. Thus, the pom-pom structure also functions as a
17 brush or the like. This may be formed of natural or synthetic
18 fibers or strands. Preferably, the fibers or strands are of
19 natural hair and may be colored or multicolored with a
20 predetermined pattern, being coordinated with the hollow
21 elongated member.

22 When the decorative container is intended for use as
23 a direct cosmetic container, the closure system generally
24 should form a good seal, have a life cycle of a sufficiently
25 large number of opening/closing cycles for the intended use,
26 and be easily operable by hand using the pads of the thumb and
27 forefinger only. This is because cosmetic users often have
28 long fingernails, which may have wet nail polish on them. The
29 decorative container for cosmetic use has an elongated
30 decorative end closure which has a surface externally
31 accessible and has a screw-type closure. The decorative end
32 closure may extend away from the aperture of the hollow
33 elongated container, or may act as a sleeve which fits
34 circumjacent to a portion of the hollow elongated container.
35 The closure system may also comprise a bayonet closure, a
36 friction seal, an O-ring seal, snap closure or other known
37 closure systems.

38 A cosmetic container according to the present
39 invention may be used for various types of facial cosmetics and

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1 skin care products, perfumes, bath beads, bath salts, soap
2 flakes, nail polish, and the like. When the contents are
3 liquid, the container preferably comprises an elongated squeeze
4 bottle with a nozzle at an apex thereof. The nozzle may be a
5 part of or embedded in a pom-pom, or may be separate from the
6 decorative closure.

7 In the event that the decorative container is a
8 direct container for cosmetics, it is preferable that the
9 decorative end closure be a sheath-like or a screw on closure.

10 FRAGRANCE OR AROMA DISPERSION

11 The decorative container of the present invention may
12 advantageously be used as a fragrance or aroma dispersion
13 device. The decorative end closure has a high surface area,
14 and the elongated hollow member projects the decorative end
15 closure into free space. Further, the elongated hollow member
16 has a sufficient volume to hold a fragrance source in addition
17 to other contents, if the fragrance is a liquid. When used as
18 a fragrance or aroma disperser, a wick or other controlled flow
19 device, e.g. capillary tube, transmits the essential oil or
20 fragrance solvent into or near the decorative end closure. The
21 fragrance may then be dispersed into the air both directly and
22 secondarily from the surfaces of the elements making up the
23 decorative end closure.

24 It is preferable that the decorative end closure have
25 a floral appearance. In this case, the fragrance is preferably
26 a floral scent, and more preferably a scent relating to the
27 type of flower simulated by the decorative end closure.

28 In a preferred embodiment, a decorative container is
29 used for perfume or as a perfume sampler. In this case, the
30 decorative end closure or parts thereof are impregnated or
31 treated with the perfume aroma components. The decorative
32 container therefore may be used as a marketing tool which
33 provides both a sample of the perfume and a take-home gift.

34 BOTTLE TOP EMBODIMENT

35 Another preferred embodiment of the present invention
36 comprises a decorative fixture for a bottle, more preferably
37 a glass bottle containing a liquid, and most preferably for

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1 wine or liquor, comprising a pom-pom affixed to an attachment
2 system for attachment to the top of the bottle, as shown in
3 Fig. 31. The pom-pom 13 is affixed to an endcap 108, and
4 preferably has a diameter greater than the diameter of the neck
5 of the bottle, and may be greater than a maximum diameter of
6 the bottle. The attachment system 107 may be a plastic, foam,
7 rubber, fabric, netting, or paper sleeve which fits over the
8 neck of the bottle. The attachment system may also be a series
9 of rings, clip or clips. Preferably the attachment system is
10 designed to accomodate variations in the neck size of various
11 bottles. The sleeve may be a decorative sleeve, and
12 information bearing sleeve or a transparent sleeve.

13 In a preferred embodiment of a bottle top, the
14 attachment system comprises heat shrink tubing which is placed
15 around the neck of a bottle and heated with a heat source, such
16 as an electric heat gun. In another embodiment, the attachment
17 system comprises a styrofoam endcap sized to form a compression
18 fit over the neck of the bottle.

19 DECORATIVE CONTAINERS COMBINED WITH OTHER OBJECTS IN 20 CENTERPIECES

21 The decorative container according to the present
22 invention may advantageously be arranged with real or
23 artificial flowers or balloons or both in a centerpiece
24 arrangement. In such instance, the decorative container(s) may
25 be selected to match or to contrast the flowers or balloons.

26 SHIPPING METHOD

27 The decorative container of the present invention
28 poses a particular difficulty in transport and shipping. In
29 particular, when the decorative containers are placed in a
30 stand or base which holds a plurality of units, it is difficult
31 to provide appropriate packing materials and containers. It
32 has now been discovered that the decorative containers may be
33 safely and easily be transported by first wrapping the array
34 of decorative containers in the stand or base in stretchable
35 plastic wrap such as Saran wrap or equivalent. The wrapped
36 assembly may then be placed in a cardboard box, and the base
37 is firmly positioned with respect to an outer cardboard

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1 shipping box. Additional padding material such as crumpled
2 newspaper or shipping "popcorn", which may be made of
3 styrofoam, starch, popcorn, etc., may also be employed. The
4 preferable material is polyvinyl chloride (PVC) film, which has
5 a self-cling property. The film is stretched around the
6 members forming a bound system, held in place by the splaying
7 of the elongated members, at a portion distant from the
8 decorative end closure to avoid crushing thereof, to form a
9 bound system of rack and wands. In a preferable embodiment,
10 the rack comprises a plurality of plates having planes parallel
11 to the base, the plates having a fixed distance from the base
12 of the rack. Between any two plates, a portion of the hollow
13 elongated members is exposed, and the plastic wrap is encircled
14 around these members. Because the wrap has "cling", it holds
15 the elements in place with respect to the rack. The rack is
16 preferably positioned with respect to the outer shipping
17 container by a sleeve, preferably formed of corrugated paper,
18 which presses the rack against the base of the outer container
19 which is held in place by the top of the shipping container.
20 Alternatively, a structure fixed to the base of the shipping
21 container may positively engage the rack and hold it in
22 relation to the shipping container.

23 CHRISTMAS TREE ORNAMENT

24 In a preferred format, the decorative container of
25 the present invention may be used as a hanging ornament for,
26 e.g. a christmas tree, etc., as shown in Fig. 20. Such hanging
27 ornamental use of the decorative containers, such as a floral-
28 like element 10 is characterized in that there must be a hook
29 or place for attachment of a hanging device 109 to safely
30 support the entire decorative container, preferably by means
31 of a tether 110, holding the tubular element by means of a
32 snugly fitting ring 111. The size and weight of the decorative
33 container should be low enough such that the tree limb, etc,
34 from which the decorative container is suspended is not overly
35 stressed. Thus, for such application, the container should be
36 6-12 inches long with a hollow elongated member diameter of
37 approximately 0.75-1.25 inches. Decorative containers having
38 a weight greater than that which would safely be supported by

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1 a single tree limb, etc, may have a plurality of suspension
2 elements for attachment to a plurality of suspension points,
3 to distribute the load.

4 When used as a christmas ornament, the end of the
5 hollow elongated member distal to the decorative end closure
6 may be formed like a candy cane. The hollow elongated member
7 itself may be further embellished with a helically wound ribbon
8 member 112 about its periphery. The ribbon member is
9 preferably located around the elongated hollow member; however,
10 if the elongated hollow member has a transparent or translucent
11 wall, it is possible to place a ribbon on the inner surface.

12 While there have been shown and described preferred
13 embodiments of a centerpiece assembly simulating floral bouquet
14 in accordance with the invention, it will be appreciated that
15 many changes and modifications may be made therein without,
16 however, departing from the essential spirit thereof.

CLAIMS

1

2 **I CLAIM**

3 1. A centerpiece assembly comprising:

4 (a) an array of elements simulating flowers a stem formed
5 by a tubular wand filled with candy pellets and a decorative
6 pom-pom attached to the upper end of the wand to simulate a
7 flower; and8 (b) a rack having holes therein to receive the respective
9 stems of the array to support the elements in a bouquet
10 configuration.11 2. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein
12 said wand is provided at its lower end with a removable
13 stopper.14 3. A centerpiece as set forth in claim 1, wherein said wand
15 is formed of transparent material, and said pellets are colored
16 to impart color to the stem.17 4. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein
18 said wand is formed of acrylic polymer.19 5. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein
20 said pellets are formed by colored jelly beans.21 6. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein
22 said pom-pom is formed by a puff having a distinctive color
23 from which emerges an upeard cluster of multi-colored ribbons.24 7. A centerpiece as set forth in claim 1, wherein said rack
25 comprises a base on which is anchored a center post on which
26 is supported at different levels above the base plate lower and
27 upper tier plates, each having a ring of holes therein coaxial
28 with the center post, the ring on the upper tier having a
29 larger diameter than the ring on the lower tier, whereby a stem
30 of a respective element in said array, when inserted in a hole
31 in the upper ring and a corresponding hole in the lower ring
32 has its end then resting on the base plate and is outwardly
33 inclined relative to the base plate.34 8. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 7, wherein
35 said base plate and said tier plate are circular and are formed
36 of rtansparent, synthetic plastic material.37 9. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 7, wherein
38 said rack further includes third and fourth tier plates
39 supported by said center post at higher levels above said upper

1 tier plate, said third and fourth tier plates each having a
2 ring of holes therein coaxial with the center post, whereby a
3 respective stem of an element in a second array of said
4 elements inserted in a hole in the fourth ring and a
5 corresponding hole in the third ring then has its end resting
6 on the upper tier plate and is outwardly inclined relative to
7 said upper tier plate.

8 10. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 7, wherein
9 said center post has a circular well at its upper end to
10 receive a stem of one of the elements.

11 11. A floral element adapted to function as a wand, said
12 element comprising:

13 (a) a tubular stem formed of transparent material
14 fillable with colored candy pellets which impart color to the
15 stem;

16 (b) a decorative pom-pom attached to the upper end of the
17 stem to simulate a flower; and

18 (c) a removable stopper at the lower end of the stem to
19 hold the pellets therein.

20 12. An element as set forth in claim 1, wherein said pom-pom
21 has a root which extends through an end cap attached to the
22 upper end of the stem, and further including an inner cap
23 secured to said stem to separate the root of the pom-pom from
24 the candy pellets.

25 13. A container, comprising:

26 an elongated hollow member having two ends, an axis, a
27 maximum width and an aperture, being adapted to contain
28 objects;

29 a decorative element being axially attached to one of the
30 ends of said elongated hollow member and having a maximum width
31 greater than said maximum width of the elongated hollow member;

32 a pom-pom-like portion included in said decorative
33 element, said pom-pom-like portion having segments that radiate
34 in substantially three dimensions to substantially fill a
35 central region;

36 an attachment system for said pom-pom-like portion for
37 axially attaching said pom-pom-like portion to said elongated
38 hollow member; and

39 an openable cover adapted to obscure said aperture and to

1 substantially contain the objects in said elongated hollow
2 member.

3 14. The container according to claim 13, wherein the objects
4 are edible foodstuffs.

5 15. The container according to claim 14, wherein the edible
6 foodstuffs are colored candies.

7 16. The container according to claim 13, wherein the objects
8 are selected from the group consisting of solids and liquids.

9 17. The container according to claim 13, wherein said pom-pom-
10 like portion has floral characteristics.

11 18 The container according to claim 13, further comprising
12 a controllable release energy source.

13 19. The container according to claim 13, further comprising
14 a module having an controllable release energy source selected
15 from the group consisting of electrical, mechanical, chemical,
16 explosive, and pneumatic.

17 20. The container according to claim 19, further comprising
18 an electronic module.

19 21. The container according to claim 20, wherein said
20 electronic module performs a function selected from the group
21 consisting of light generation, light reception, data
22 communication, audio reception, audio transmission, and
23 electromechanical control.

24 22. The container according to claim 19, wherein said
25 controlled controlled release energy source causes the
26 expulsion of substances from said container.

27 23. A display, comprising:

28 a plurality of containers, each comprising an elongated
29 hollow member having two ends, an axis, a maximum width and an
30 aperture, being adapted to contain objects; a decorative
31 element being axially attached to one of the ends of said
32 elongated hollow member and having a maximum width greater than
33 said maximum width of the elongated hollow member; a pom-pom-
34 like portion included in said decorative element, said pom-pom-
35 like portion having segments that radiate in substantially
36 three dimensions to substantially fill a central region; an
37 attachment system for said pom-pom-like portion for axially
38 attaching said pom-pom-like portion to said elongated hollow
39 member; and an openable cover adapted to obscure said aperture

1 and to substantially contain the objects in said elongated
2 hollow member; and

3 a rack for arranging said plurality of containers in an
4 arrangement.

5 24. The display according to claim 23, wherein said
6 arrangement is selected from the group consisting of bouquets,
7 fans, frontals, laterals, cascades, conicals, and fountains.

8 25. The display according to claim 23, wherein said pom-pom-
9 like portion has floral characteristics.

10 26. The display according to claim 23, wherein the objects
11 are edible foodstuffs.

12 27. The display according to claim 26, wherein the edible
13 foodstuffs are colored candies.

14 28. The display according to claim 23, wherein the objects are
15 selected from the group consisting of solids and liquids.

16 29. The display according to claim 23, wherein said pom-pom-
17 like portion has floral characteristics.

18 30. The display according to claim 23, further comprising a
19 controllable release energy source.

20 31. The display according to claim 23, further comprising a
21 module having an controllable release energy source selected
22 from the group consisting of electrical, mechanical, chemical,
23 explosive, and pneumatic.

24 32. The display according to claim 25, further comprising an
25 electronic module.

26 33. The display according to claim 32, wherein said electronic
27 module performs a function selected from the group consisting
28 of light generation, light reception, data communication, audio
29 reception, audio transmission, and electromechanical control.

30 34. The container according to claim 31, wherein said
31 controlled controlled release energy source causes the
32 expulsion of substances from said container.

33 35. A cosmetic container comprising:

34 an elongated hollow member having two ends, an axis, a
35 maximum width and an aperture, being adapted to contain a
36 cosmetic substance;

37 a decorative element being axially attached to one of the
38 ends of said elongated hollow member and having a maximum width
39 greater than said maximum width of the elongated hollow member;

- 45 -

1 a puff-like portion included in said decorative element,
2 said puff-like portion having a soft texture and a
3 substantially filled central region;

4 an attachment system for said puff-like portion for
5 axially attaching said puff-like portion to said elongated
6 hollow member; and

7 an openable cover adapted to obscure said aperture and to
8 substantially contain the objects in said elongated hollow
9 member.

10 36. The cosmetic container according to claim 35, wherein said
11 puff-like portion comprises a cosmetic applicator.

12 37. The container according to claim 13, further comprising
13 a source of fragrance associated with said pom-pom-like
14 portion.

15 38. The display according to claim 23, further comprising an
16 ornament selected from the group consisting of a ballon, a
17 flower or an artificial flower.

18 39. The display according to claim 23, wherein said ornament
19 is a flower or artificial flower.

20 40. The display according to claim 23, further comprising a
21 shipping enclosure having a bottom and a top, having an
22 apparatus for retaining said rack proximate to said bottom of
23 said shipping enclosure, and a plastic cling wrap around said
24 containers, holding said containers fixed in relation to said
25 rack.

AMENDED CLAIMS

1 [received by the International Bureau on 25 January 1994 (25.01.94) ;
2 original claims 1, 11, 12, 23 and 37 amended ;
3 remaining claims unchanged (5 pages)]

3 1. A centerpiece assembly comprising:

4 (a) an array of elements, each element comprising a stem
5 portion having a hollow, an end and a decorative pom-pom
6 portion positioned distally with respect to said end, and
7 wherein said stem portion and said pom-pom portion simulate a
8 flower; and

9 (b) a structure to receive said respective stem portions
10 of said array to support said elements in a bouquet-like
11 configuration.

12 2. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein
13 access to said hollow is provided axially.

14 3. A centerpiece as set forth in claim 1, wherein said hollow
15 comprises transparent material and colored contents.

16 4. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 3, wherein
17 said contents comprise colored jelly beans.

18 5. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein
19 said pom-pom portion has an axis and is formed by a puff having
20 a distinctive color from which emerges an axially directed
21 cluster of multi-colored ribbons.

22 6. A centerpiece as set forth in claim 1, wherein said
23 structure is a rack which comprises a base on which is anchored
24 a center post on which, at different levels above the base
25 plate, lower and upper tier plates are supported, each having
26 a ring of holes therein coaxially directed with respect to said
27 center post, said ring of said upper tier having a larger
28 diameter than said ring of said lower tier, whereby a stem
29 portion of a respective element in said array, when inserted
30 in a hole in said upper ring and a corresponding hole in said
31 lower ring rests on said base plate and is outwardly inclined
32 relative to said base plate.

33 7. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 6, wherein
34 said base plate and said tier plate are circular and are formed
35 of transparent plastic material.

36 8. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 6, wherein
37 said rack further comprises third and fourth tier plates
38 supported by said center post at higher levels above said upper
39 tier plate, said third and fourth tier plates each having a

1 ring of holes therein coaxially directed with respect to said
2 center post, whereby a respective stem portion of an element
3 in a second array of said elements inserted in a hole in said
4 fourth ring and a corresponding hole in said third ring rests
5 on said upper tier plate and is outwardly inclined relative to
6 said upper tier plate.

7 9. A centerpiece assembly as set forth in claim 6, wherein
8 said center post has a circular well at its upper end to
9 receive a stem portion of an element.

10 10. An element as set forth in claim 1, wherein said pom-pom
11 portion comprises a root which extends through an end cap
12 axially attached to said hollow stem portion, and further
13 including an inner cap secured to said hollow stem portion to
14 separate said root of said pom-pom portion from the candy
15 pellets.

16 11. A floral element adapted to function as a wand, said
17 element comprising:

18 (a) a transparent tubular stem having an end, fillable
19 with colored candy pellets which impart color to the stem;

20 (b) a decorative pom-pom positioned distally with respect
21 to said end to simulate a flower; and

22 (c) an openable seal to hold the pellets therein.

23 12. A container, comprising:

24 an elongated hollow member adapted to contain objects,
25 having two ends, a maximum width and an aperture;

26 a decorative element being positioned distal to one of
27 said ends of said elongated hollow member and having a maximum
28 width greater than said maximum width of said elongated hollow
29 member;

30 a pom-pom-like portion included in said decorative
31 element, said pom-pom-like portion having segments that radiate
32 in substantially three dimensions to substantially fill a
33 central region;

34 a system for positioning said pom-pom-like portion
35 distally with respect one of said ends of said elongated hollow
36 member; and

37 an openable seal adapted to obscure said aperture and to
38 substantially contain the objects in said elongated hollow
39 member.

- 1 13. The container according to claim 12, wherein the objects
2 are edible foodstuffs.
- 3 14. The container according to claim 13, wherein the edible
4 foodstuffs are colored candies.
- 5 15. The container according to claim 12, wherein the objects
6 are selected from the group consisting of solids and liquids.
- 7 16. The container according to claim 12, wherein said pom-pom-
8 like portion has floral characteristics.
- 9 17. The container according to claim 12, further comprising
10 a controllably releasable energy source.
- 11 18. The container according to claim 12, further comprising
12 a module having a controllably releasable energy source
13 selected from the group consisting of electrical, mechanical,
14 chemical, explosive, and pneumatic.
- 15 19. The container according to claim 18, further comprising
16 an electronic module.
- 17 20. The container according to claim 19, wherein said
18 electronic module performs a function selected from the group
19 consisting of light generation, light reception, data
20 communication, audio reception, audio transmission, and
21 electromechanical control.
- 22 21. The container according to claim 18, wherein said
23 controllably releasable energy source causes the expulsion of
24 substances from said container.
- 25 22. The container according to claim 12, further comprising
26 a source of fragrance associated with said pom-pom-like
27 portion.
- 28 23. A display, comprising:
29 a plurality of elements each comprising an elongated
30 hollow member adapted to contain objects, having two ends, a
31 maximum width and an aperture; a decorative element being
32 positioned distally to one of said ends of said elongated
33 hollow member and having a maximum width greater than said
34 maximum width of said elongated hollow member; a pom-pom-like
35 portion included in said decorative element, said pom-pom-like
36 portion having segments that radiate in substantially three
37 dimensions to substantially fill a central region; a system for
38 positioning said pom-pom-like portion distally with respect to
39 one of said ends of said elongated hollow member; and an

1 openable seal adapted to obscure said aperture and to
2 substantially contain the objects in said elongated hollow
3 member; and

4 a structure for positioning said plurality of containers
5 in an arrangement.

6 24. The display according to claim 23, wherein said
7 arrangement is selected from the group consisting of bouquets,
8 fans, frontals, laterals, cascades, conicals, and fountains.

9 25. The display according to claim 23, wherein said pom-pom-
10 like portion has floral characteristics.

11 26. The display according to claim 23, wherein the objects
12 are edible foodstuffs.

13 27. The display according to claim 26, wherein the edible
14 foodstuffs are colored candies.

15 28. The display according to claim 23, wherein the objects are
16 selected from the group consisting of solids and liquids.

17 29. The display according to claim 23, further comprising a
18 controllably releasable energy source.

19 30. The display according to claim 23, further comprising a
20 module having an controllably releasable energy source selected
21 from the group consisting of electrical, mechanical, chemical,
22 explosive, and pneumatic.

23 31. The display according to claim 23, further comprising an
24 electronic module.

25 32. The display according to claim 31, wherein said electronic
26 module performs a function selected from the group consisting
27 of light generation, light reception, data communication, audio
28 reception, audio transmission, and electromechanical control.

29 33. The display according to claim 30, wherein said
30 controllably releasable energy source causes the expulsion of
31 substances from at least one of said containers.

32 34. The display according to claim 23, further comprising an
33 ornament selected from the group consisting of a balloon, a
34 flower and an artificial flower.

35 35. The display according to claim 23, further comprising an
36 ornament selected from the group consisting of a flower and an
37 artificial flower.

38 36. The display according to claim 23, further comprising a
39 shipping enclosure having a bottom, a top, an apparatus for

1 retaining said positioning structure proximate to said bottom
2 of said shipping enclosure, and plastic cling wrap, said
3 plastic cling wrap encircling said containers to hold said
4 containers in fixed relation to said rack.

5 37. A cosmetic container comprising:

6 an hollow member adapted to contain a cosmetic substance,
7 having an end, a maximum width and an aperture;

8 a decorative element being positioned distal to said end
9 of said hollow member and having a maximum width greater than
10 said maximum width of said hollow member;

11 a puff-like portion included in said decorative element,
12 said puff-like portion being flexible and having a
13 substantially filled central region;

14 a system for positioning said puff-like portion distally
15 in relation to said hollow member; and

16 a seal adapted to obscure said aperture and to
17 substantially contain the objects in said elongated hollow
18 member.

19 38. The cosmetic container according to claim 37, wherein said
20 puff-like portion comprises a cosmetic applicator.

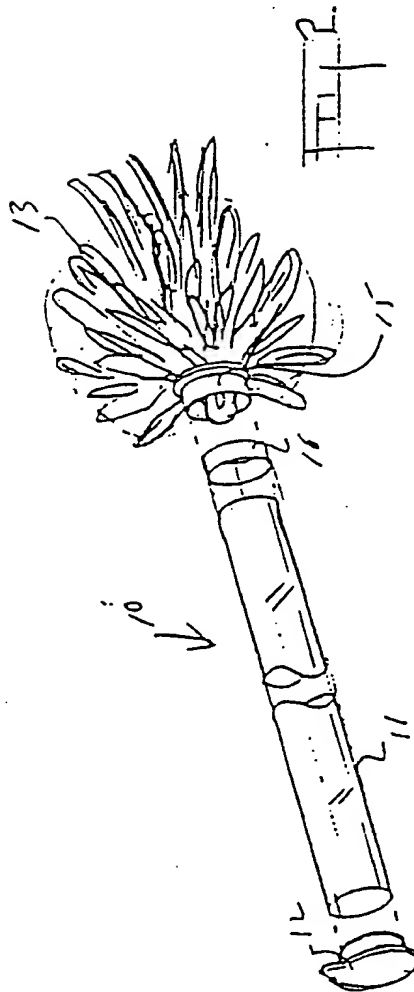
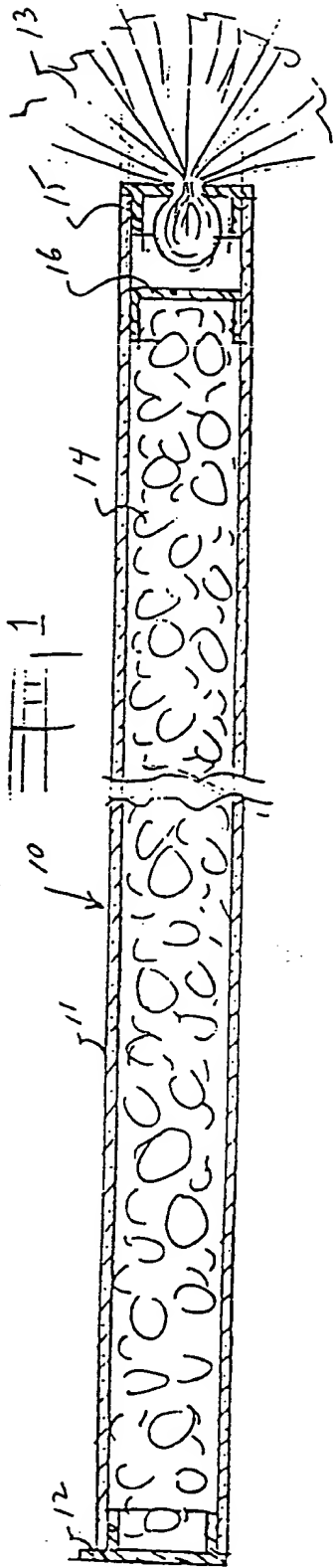
21 39. The cosmetic container according to claim 37, further
22 comprising a structure for supporting said cosmetic container.

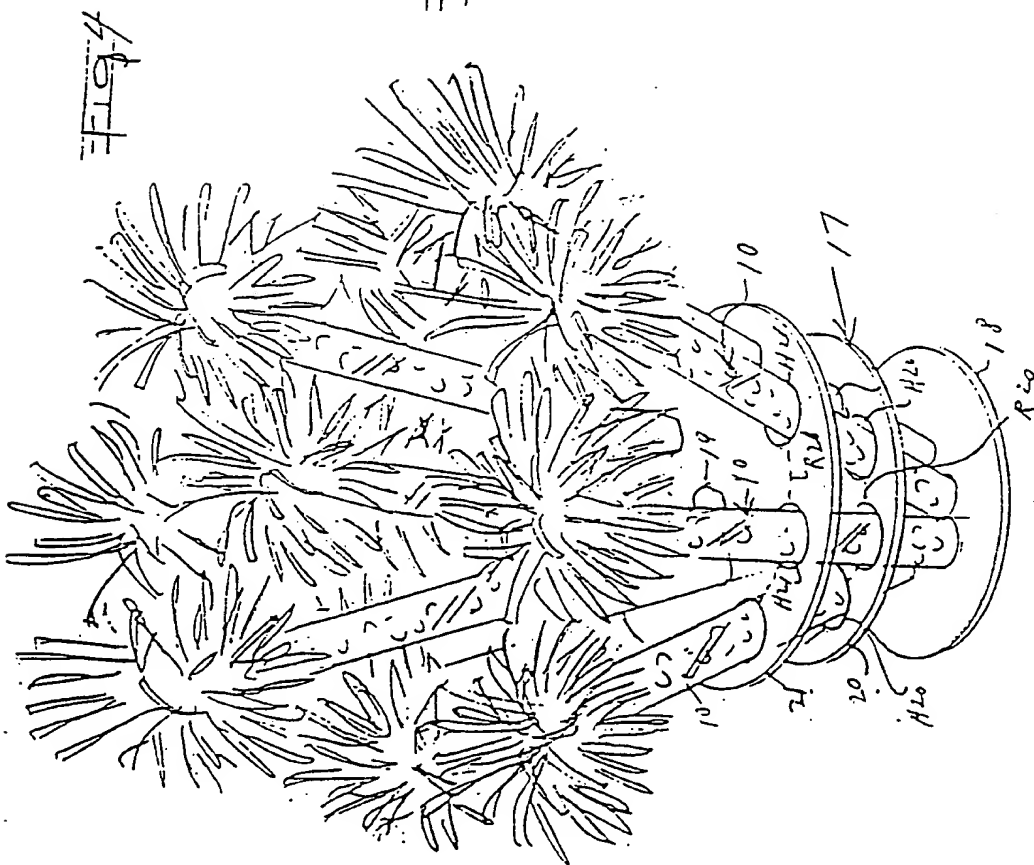
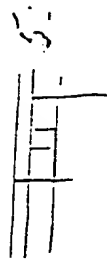
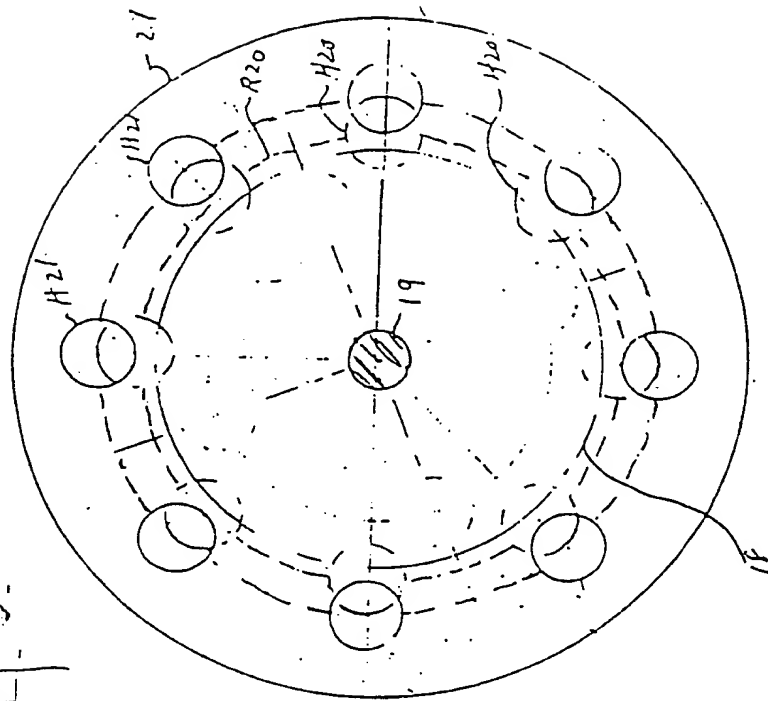
STATEMENT UNDER ARTICLE 19

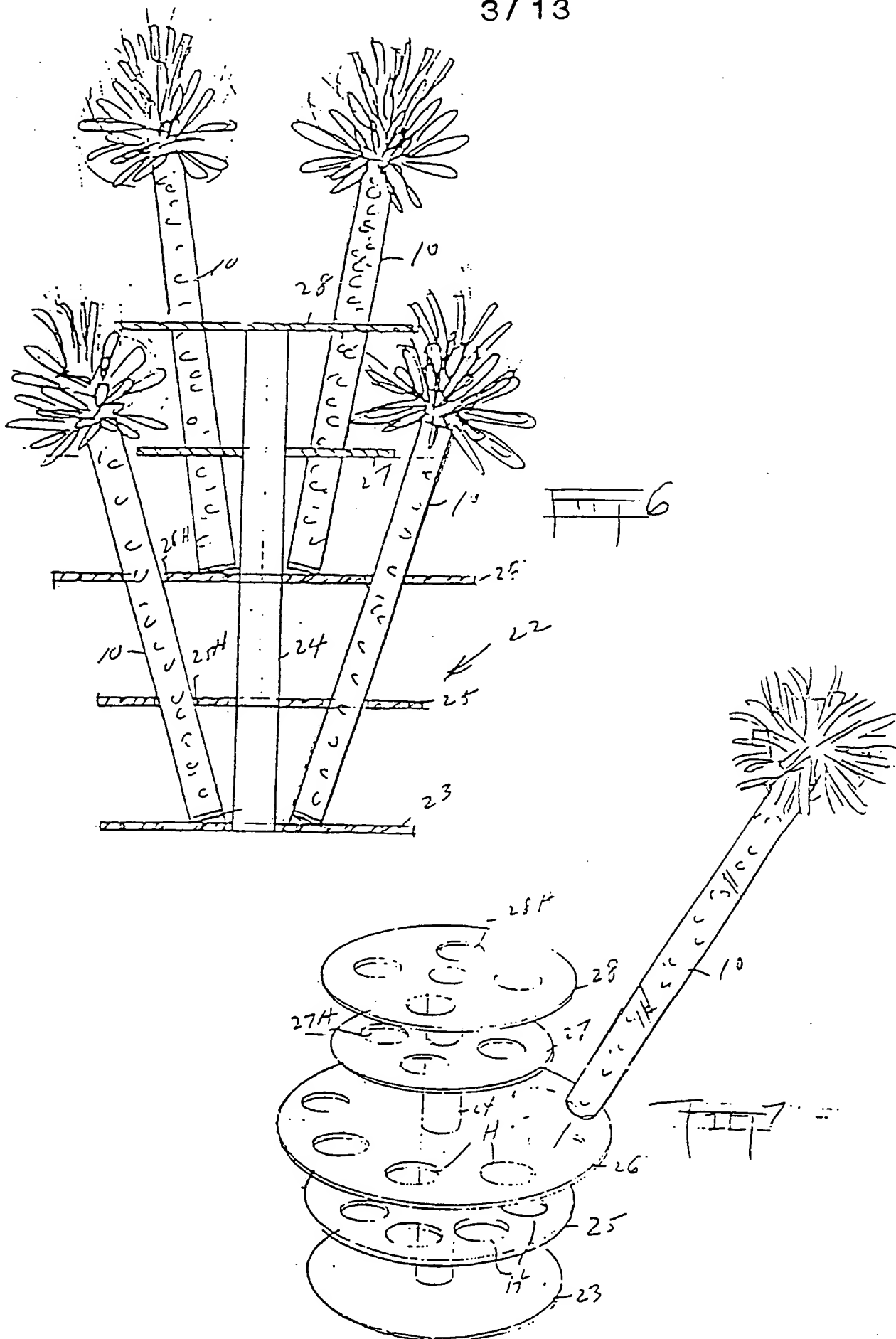
Applicants herewith submit replacement pages 41 through 45 amending the claims of the above-identified PCT application. These amendments are made in response to the International Search Report mailed November 26, 1993 by the ISA/US. Applicants have amended the independent claims 1, 11, 12, 23 and 37 to set forth that the pom-pom portion is positioned distal to the end of the stem. Applicants have further amended claims 11, 12, 23 and 37 to provide that the hollow is accessed through an openable seal.

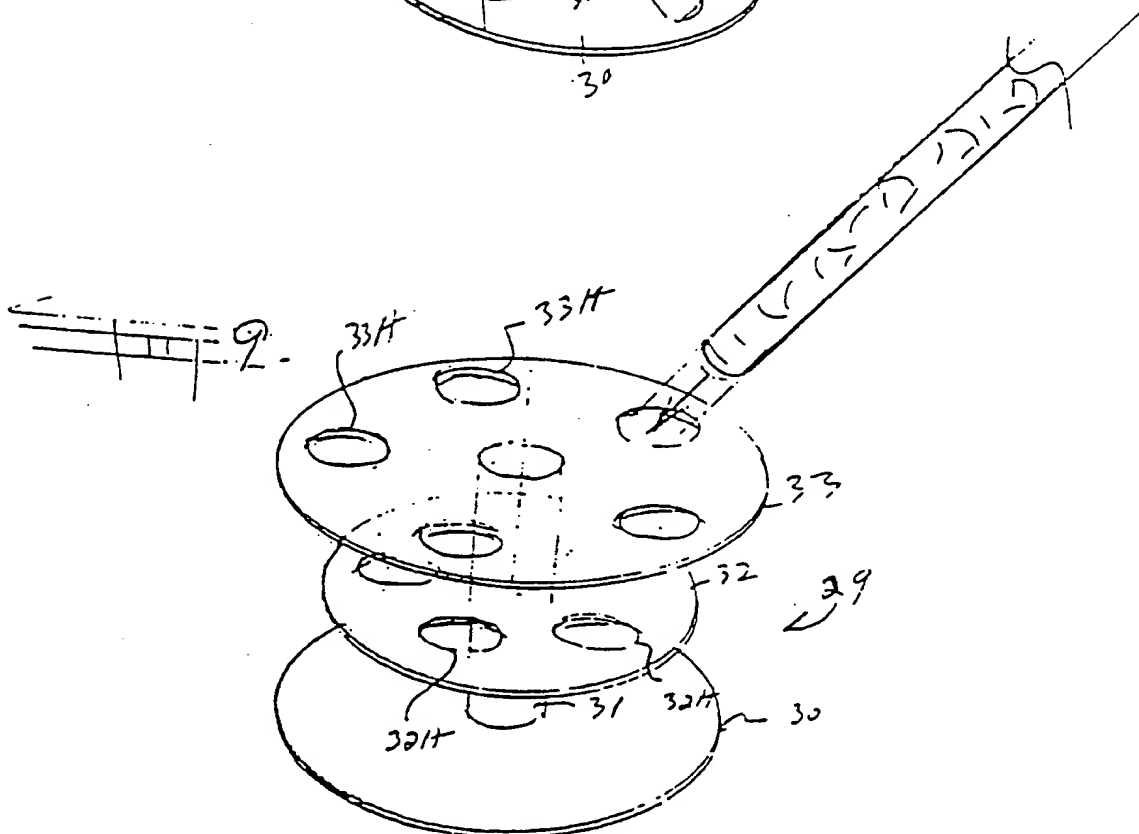
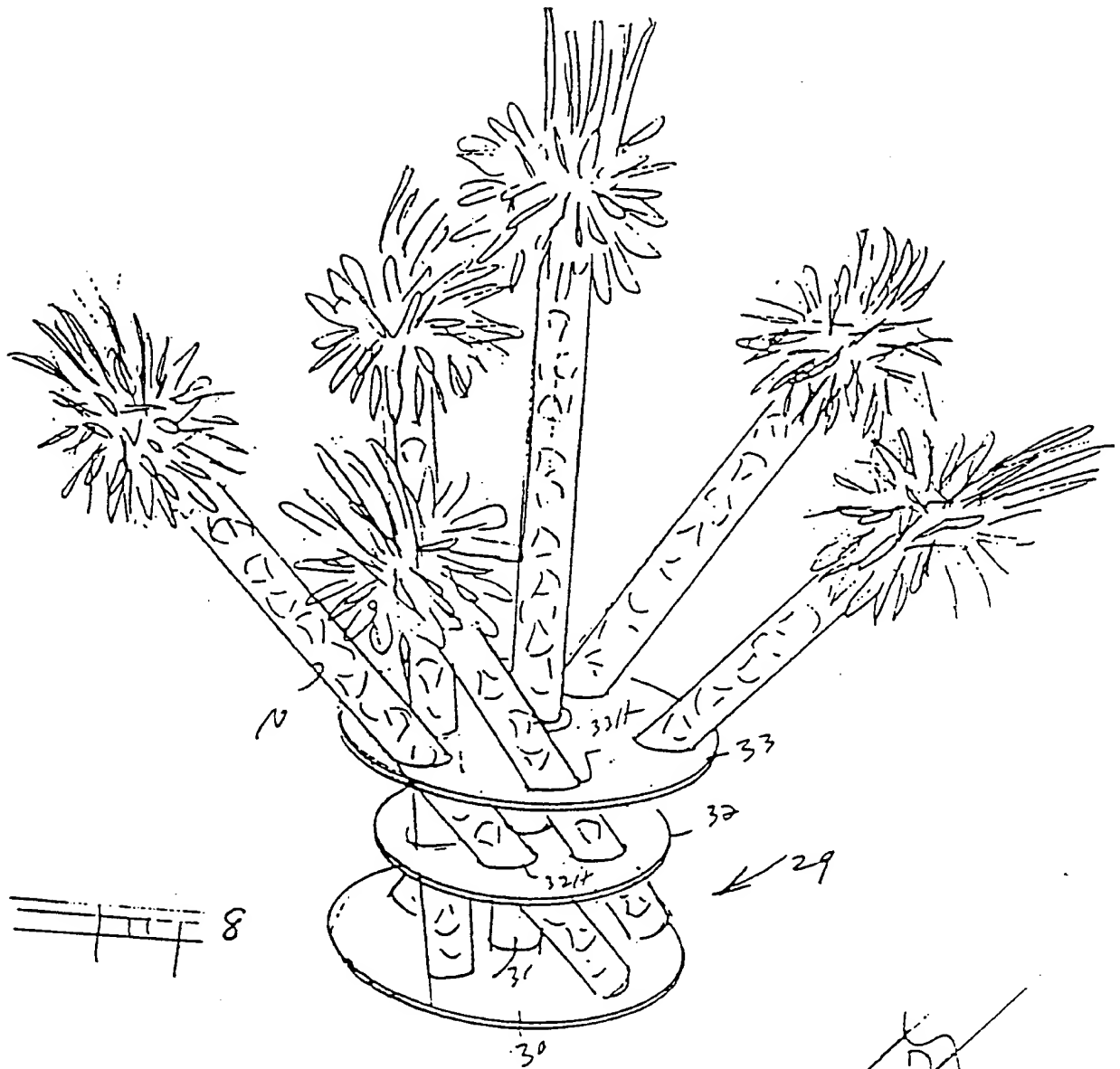
The claims have also been reorganized to follow a pattern of dependence and amended to correct typographical, grammatical errors and to provide antecedent basis for claim elements.

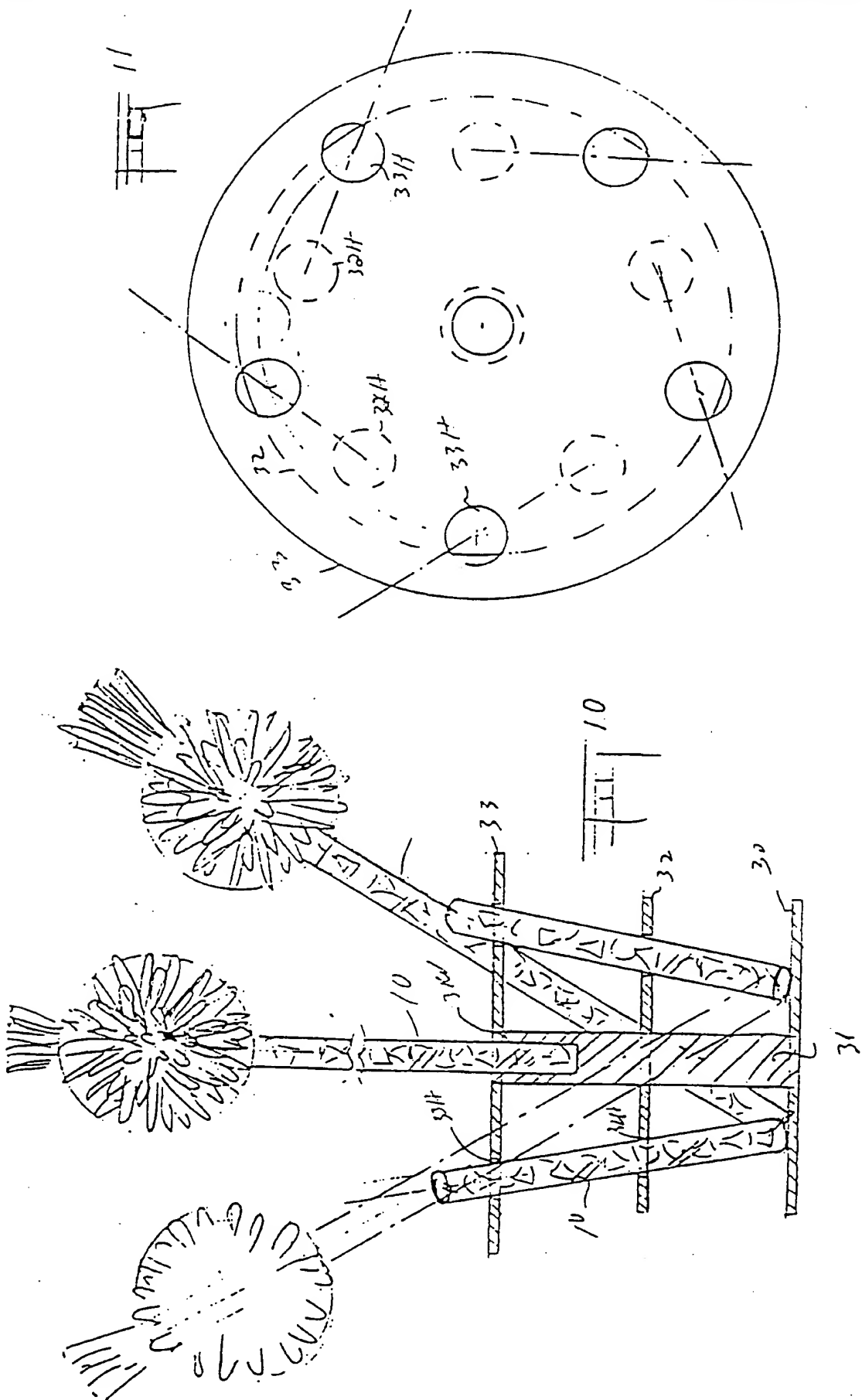
It is believed that the International Search Report provides basis for believing that the presently submitted claims, including broadening amendments, are patentable.











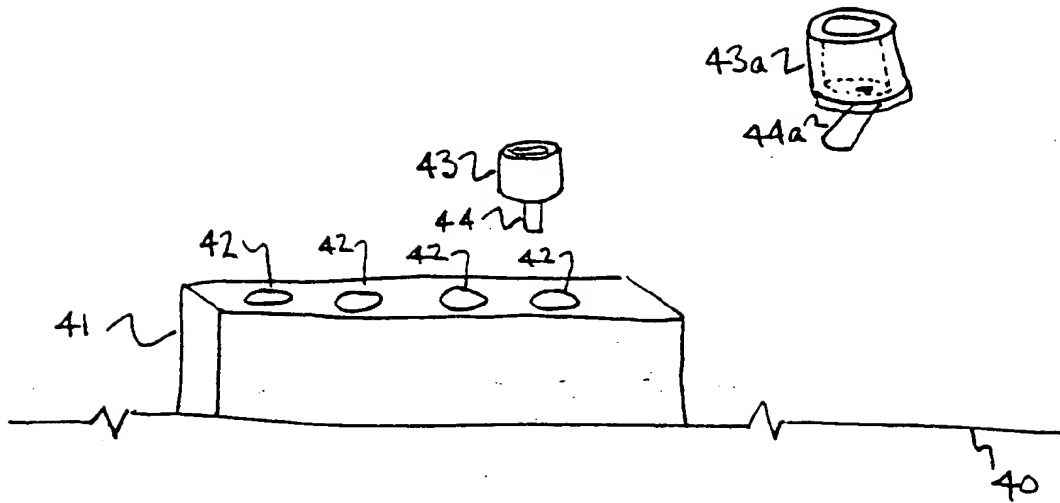


FIG. 12

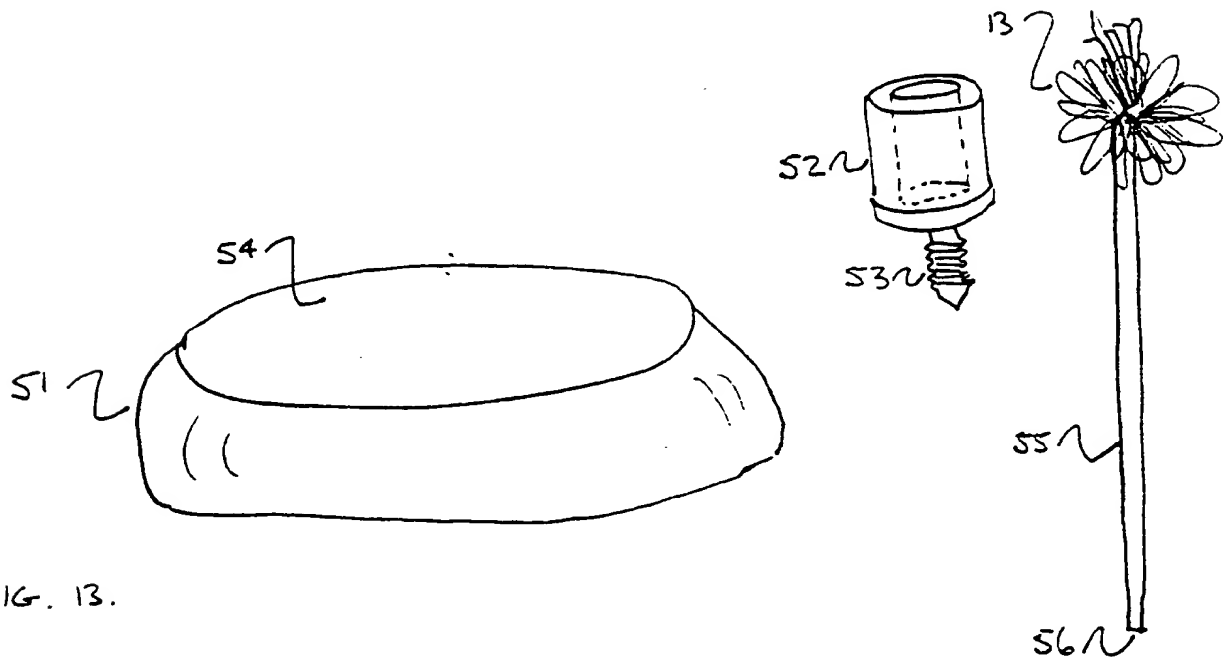


FIG. 13.

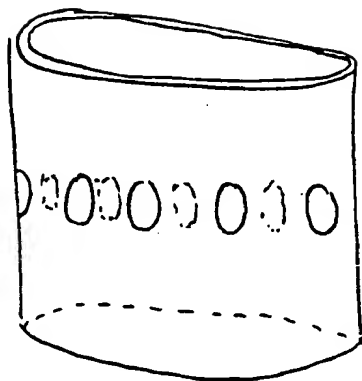


FIG. 14

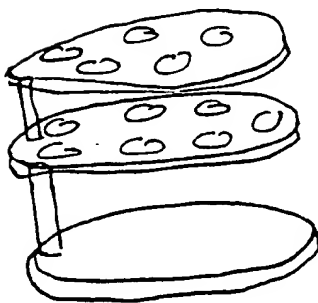
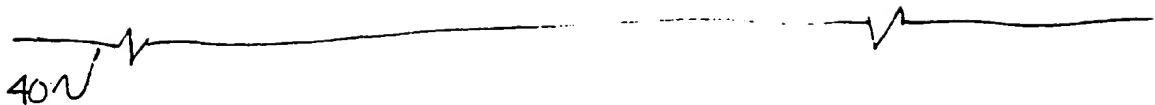
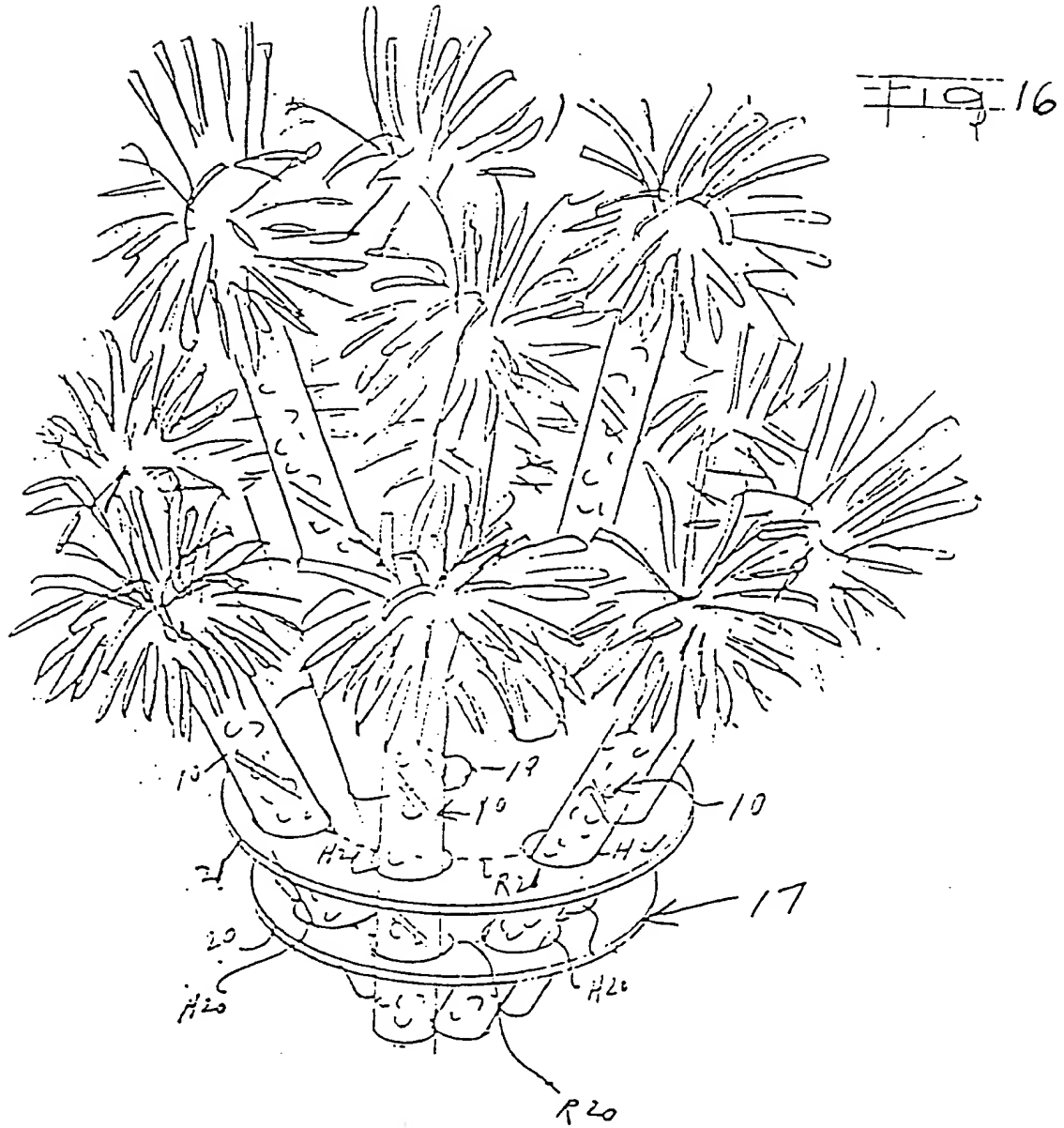


FIG. 15





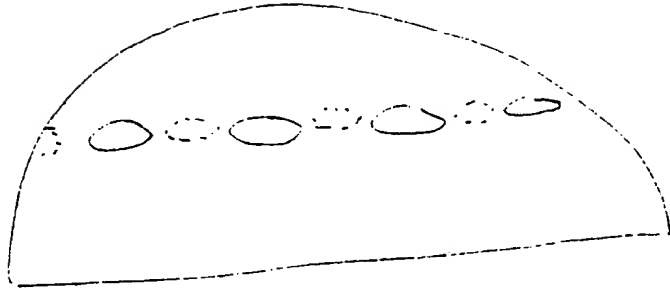


FIG. 17

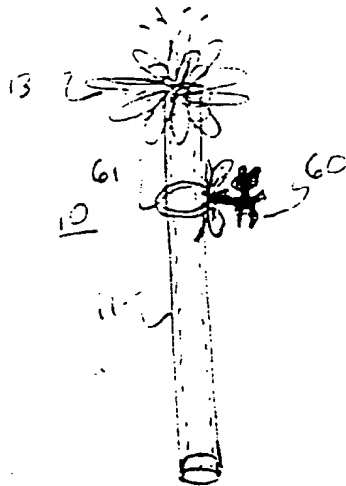


FIG. 18

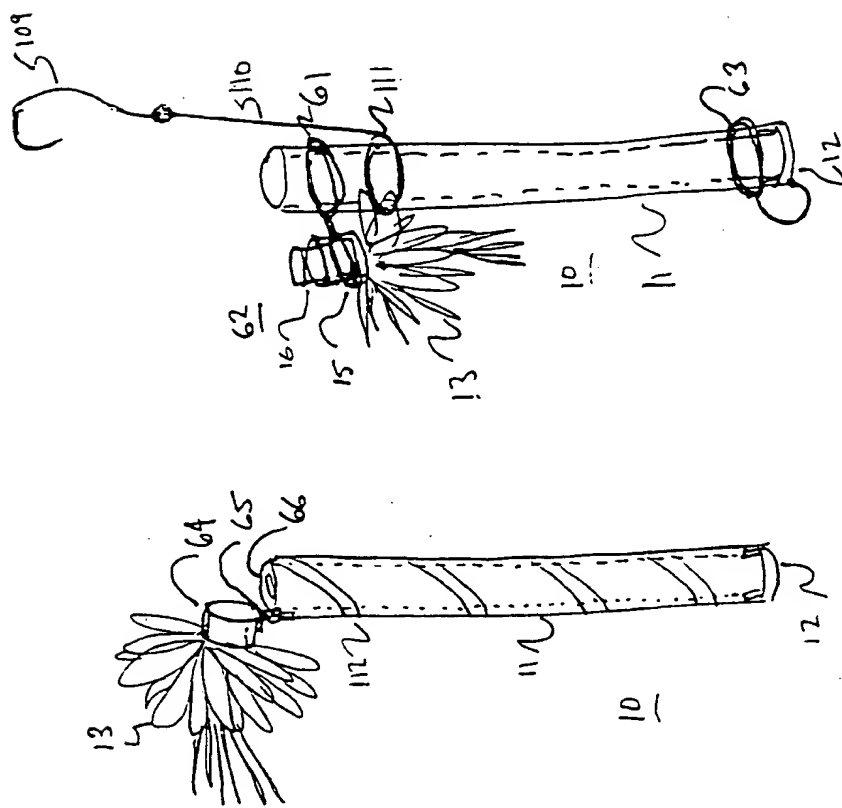


FIG. 19

FIG. 20

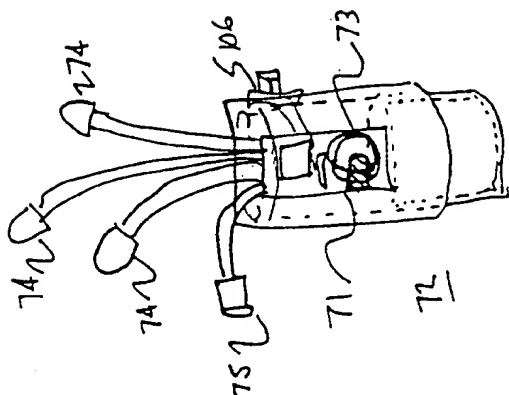


FIG. 21

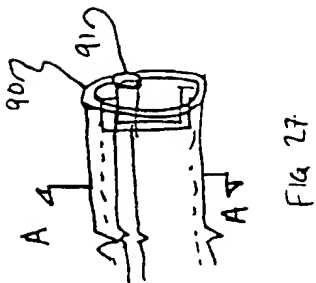


FIG. 27

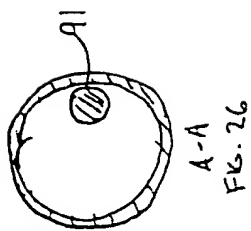


FIG. 26

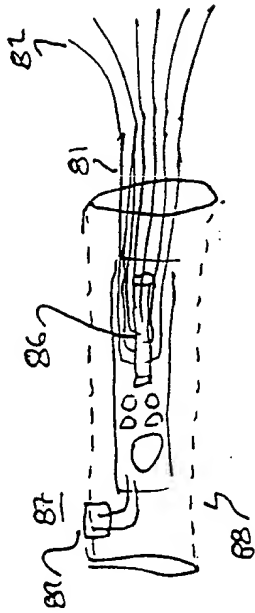


FIG. 25

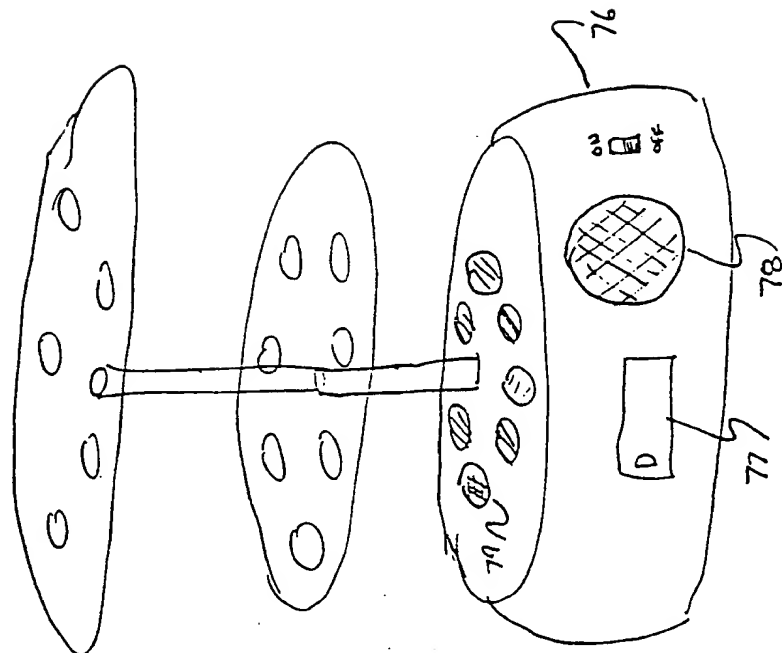


FIG. 22

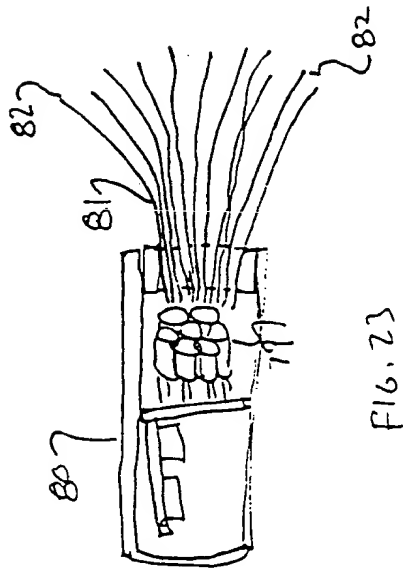


FIG. 23

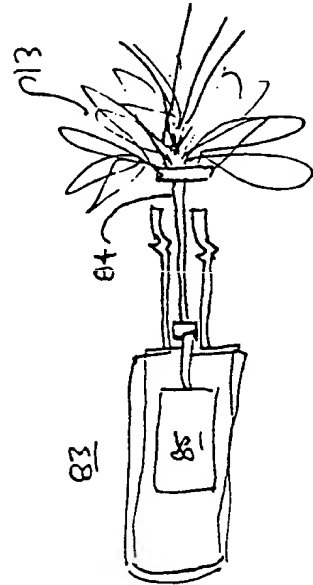


FIG. 24

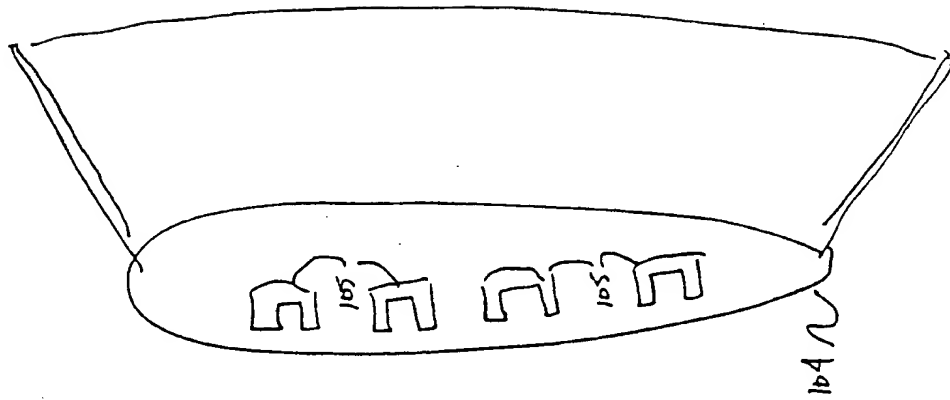


FIG. 30

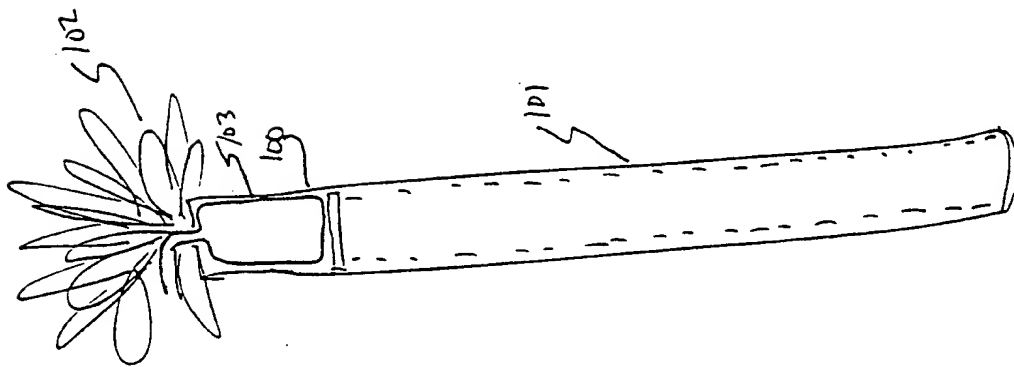


FIG. 29

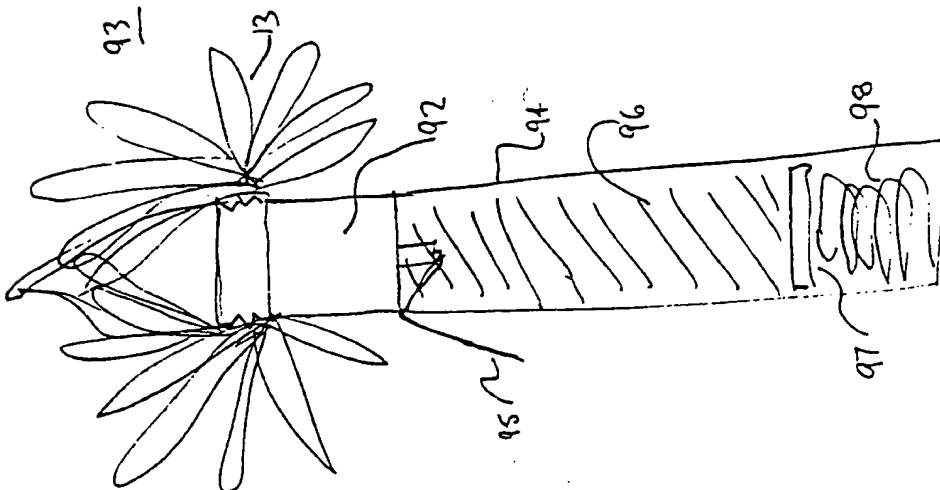


FIG. 28

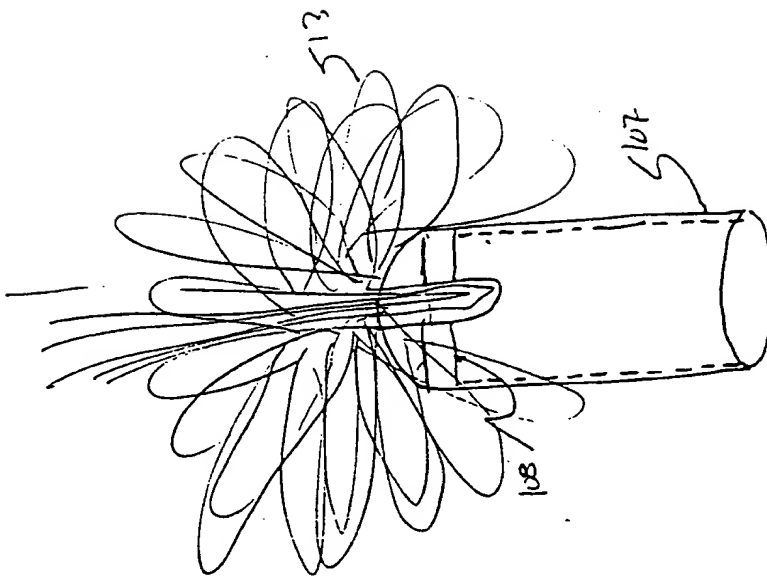


FIG. 31

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US93/07411**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER**

IPC(5) :DO4D 7/06

US CL :428/4

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 428/4, 23, 24; 47/41.12, 41.13, 41.14; 211/13.

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US, A, 4,461,118 (FERTIG) 24 JULY 1984, see Abstract and Fig. 1.	1-40
A	US, A, 3,768,202 (WHEELLOCK) 30 OCTOBER 1973, see Abstract.	1-40
A	US, A, 2,686,989 (DILLON et al.) 24 AUGUST 1954, see Figure 6.	1-40
A	US, A, 1,468,743 (PORTER) 25 SEPTEMBER 1923, see Figure 1.	1-40



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	* T* later documents published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
* A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be part of particular relevance	* X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
* E* earlier document published on or after the international filing date	* Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
* L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	* &* document member of the same patent family
* O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
* P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

13 OCTOBER 1993

Date of mailing of the international search report

26 NOV 1993

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US
Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Box PCT
Washington, D.C. 20231

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Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet)(July 1992)*

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